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D. Robertson

BONANZA

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I

YELLOW SANDS

BONANZA

WHERE EARTH AND SKY MET

THE time was an evening in the spring when the atmosphere was all red and gold; the place the flowering grass mounds between the white poplar and birch beside little Yellow Sands River. I had walked out to haul up my sturgeon lines, and had reached the thicket of pines on the sand side of our snake fence, where I could begin to hear the splash of the waters, when my well-trained ears caught a new and different sound proceeding from the bush-bound trail. Curiosity led me to intrude, and I soon came upon a group of Indian maidens at play, pelting each other with soft green cones, and using their shawls as shields to protect their faces.

Directly they saw me a mischievous cry went up, and they united forces, their black eyes dancing with fun as they flung their dainty missiles in my direction with a pitiless accuracy. Presently I dashed forward and captured one of the girls, the most audacious, and, incidentally, the most handsome. She struggled

with me, her great beautiful eyes two imps of laughter, but I held on, and, as a punishment, tried to force one of the cones into her laughing mouth, The soft scented thing crumbled upon her teeth ; she twisted round, slapped me sharply across the cheek, and, with another deft twist, freed herself, her black hair dashing into my face as she escaped.

The other girls stood at a distance, and chaffed at my defeat.

"When did you come?" I called, in the Cree which I knew better than English, because the girls were strangers to me.

It was Akshelah, my chief tormentor, who replied from the summit of an ant-mound. The tribe had just come to Yellow Sands from Thunder Lake, where fish and fur-bearers had become scarce.

"Come with me," commanded the girl, holding out her brown shapely arms. "I will take you down to the tepee, and the chief, my father, will give you some moose."

"We have lots of moose," I said. "Come with me, and I will give you a sturgeon for your father."

"But the sturgeon is in the river," said the bright girl, her head to one side.

"I hope he is pulling at my line," I said.

Then the girl jumped from the ant-mound, and swung round, catching at my hand, and so drew me away from her companions.

"I will not walk over those stones," said she, and I noticed then that her left foot was tied up. Yet she

walked lightly enough beside me, through the thicket of pines, where some purple butterflies idled, and down to the yellow sands, where the surface was as soft and yielding as white moss.

This bright girl was full of talk, and as we walked she told me of the many things she had done, and all she had seen, the silver fox, the white bear, and Wepechenite, the walrus, himself.

"One day," said she very sternly, "I shot a moose myself."

"I will track a musk-ox for you, and you shall kill that," I said.

"Perhaps I should be afraid," said Akshelah, with a quick glance.

"You would not be afraid if I were with you."

Said she more slowly:

"Perhaps you shall come down and dance with me at the lodge. But where is your sturgeon for my father?"

Line after line I gathered in out of the amber water, but there was no sturgeon that evening. When we had visited the last, Akshelah laughed delightedly.

"A fisherman!" she cried. "Such a fisherman! I am sure you could not catch the gold-eyes."

These are stupid little fish, which will suffer themselves to be pulled out of the water with the hand.

"I will catch one, and put it down your back," I threatened, but Akshelah went on laughing.

"The gold-eyes will have all sunk to the bottom because the sun is going," said she. "You will have to go home empty-handed. We laugh at the young men when they come home empty-handed."

"You are laughing at me now!"

"I laugh at everyone." She tried to hush her merry voice. "In the morning sometimes I laugh into the face of the sun himself."

Our homestead was encircled by rolling park-like country, which stretched away endlessly upon three sides; but on the fourth, the western, there was merely a strip of bush separating us from the Yellow Sands River, which made a winding course round Big Stone Point, and entered Lake Whispering some twenty-six miles lower down. Our log-house stood upon a clearing, with a little cow-byre adjoining which sheltered our few beasts in winter; both buildings were thatched with swamp grass. We had reclaimed from the bush about five acres of garden, where father grew what grain and vegetables we needed, and the flowers grew themselves. The willow scrub and the wood ants were our principal difficulties; and Antoine, our Indian servant, whose duty it was to keep the ground clear, devoted more anathemas than labour upon his work. To this day I do not know who owns that land, whether the Crown or the Hudson Bay Company, but the matter is of no importance.

One night when I reached home father was smoking, sitting upon a log beside the door, silent

as usual. Father had always been taciturn; had I not been provided with Indian companions, I might have altogether lost the use of my tongue. He eyed me more narrowly than usual, I thought, but he said nothing as I passed. We had our supper, and I was about to roam outside to watch the insects of the night at play, when my father surprised me by calling in a hoarse voice:

"Sit down, Rupert!"

I had always stood in awe of the unhappy-looking man who called himself my father. All my life I had lived with him at Yellow Sands, knowing no other relation, no other friend, except my Indians and morose MacCaskill, factor of the dying Hudson Bay Station. Why my father spent himself there I did not know, and the thought never troubled me, because I did not then know that there was any world outside that narrow circle of the horizon where earth and sky met. I had no learning; I could neither read nor write. I had often been to the lake shores, and I knew that boats sometimes came to the yellow beach; but where these boats came from I had no idea.

"Rupert," began my father, "have I taught you anything? Do you know what London is?"

He spoke in the deliberate manner of a man little accustomed to speech, and he had his hand to his brow as though his brain were tired. I replied, not wishing to be ignorant:

"Is it anything like a moose?"

"It is not an animal," said my father. I wonder now that he did not smile. "London is the name of a city, and you were born there."

He stopped, and I could hear the throbbing murmurs of the night. There was no lamp in our shanty, but we could see by the northern lights, and by the fire which smouldered outside the open door to keep away the mosquitos. My father struck a match, rekindled his pipe, and, with the match still burning between his fingers, walked across to the far corner of the room, and opened a box; presently he came near, and I saw that he held a buckskin bag. He poured out the contents upon the table, but when I bent forward to look, as the light flickered up momentarily, I was disappointed. Only a few ounces of coarse dirt, and some small honey-combed stones.

"Is that stuff of any use, father?" I said. He looked across slowly, and I went on: "I picked some yellow stones like those out of the white rocks up Split Leaf Creek. I gave them to Factor MacCaskill."

Turning upon me abruptly, my father went on:

"I have been for the best part of my life a gold-hunter. I, too, was born in London, and I was once what they call a gentleman. You may understand the meaning of the word some day. I have made more than one fortune in my time, but fortunes so made melt as quickly. During an exceptional period of prosperity I returned to my native city, there rried, and you were born." He started suddenly. ome with me, Rupert."

He had re-collected the gold, and now snatched at the bag and left the shanty. I followed, along the dark-blue trail, where I had lingered with Akshelah that afternoon, and out over the river falling in bars of alternate black and silver to its own soft music. Father held the buck-skin bag swinging by one hand. It was large and heavy, but he launched it forth with one strong movement, and it went under the water with a sullen splash.

"When I am gone, you shall never say that I did not teach you one lesson, boy." He went back, and I followed, wondering what this teaching meant. When we had passed the smoke of the smudge, and had regained our home, father seized my hand. "Gold has ruined me, Rupert."

Then he went away, and I suppose to sleep, but I wandered outside, trying hard to think; and when the lights grew brighter, and the sounds of the bush more distinct, my untrained mind awoke, and I had dreams that night.

Father had always looked ill. One day I thought his face was whiter than usual. I ventured to ask after his health, and succeeded in again drawing him into conversation.

"I have only a little more time to be miserable," he said, in his slow fashion. Then his manner became harsh. "Shall you stay here when I'm away, or will you go to find the world?"

I stared at him, and said the only thing I could: "Where is the world?"

"You will learn." He looked up at me, his face twitching, and said more quickly, "I have seen you with that native girl. If you want to be wise, marry her when I am dead, and live your life away here. She is a natural woman. If you must be a fool, like your father, go back to the world. You will find the false thing there."

I had picked up my muzzle-loader, thinking he had done, and was going out to the bush, but he stopped me, and his voice became nervous.

"If you ever meet with a man, a tall man, with loose white face—he would be elderly now,"—father hesitated, then laughed wretchedly, and almost shouted at me—"his name is Redpath. He has kept me here in hiding all these years."

I did not shoot any partridges that morning. By chance I met Akshelah, and after we had been together a little while, I found that the morning had somehow slipped away. She showed me how to sew with grass upon buckskin, and all the time laughed at my clumsiness. The grass would keep breaking; she declared that I strained too heavily upon it. Her little brown fingers were so light that they might have sewn with gossamers, but when I told her so she only pricked me saucily with her needle.

Nearly every day Akshelah and I were together fishing or hunting. How stern her face would become, and how resolute, as she struggled with a wolf-like jackfish, knee-deep in the yellow sands, and being drawn deeper every minute! She came with me to shoot

tree partridges, and so sure was her eye, and so agile her every movement, that she would catch the great stupid birds as they tumbled headlong out of the black poplars. I was often at the tepee, and one midnight when the moon was large I danced at the lodge with Akshelah that exhilarating dance of friendship, which makes a man beside himself for the time with mad strength and passion. The tribe became as my own by the rights of the dance, and I was the son of the chief and the brother of each brave.

And yet nearer to me the cloud of sorrow gathered and darkened. In spite of the skilled attention of our native Antoine, father weakened fast, more quickly, perhaps, because he would not take to his bed, but insisted upon working as he was able.

Factor MacCaskill came over one day, and when he left I met him along the trail. He was a big, morose man, but his heart was sound.

"Rupe," he said, "old man's call is on the way. We'll miss him hereabouts."

That same evening I was cutting rye-grass along the snake fence, Akshelah near me hindering, when Antoine came running out of the shadows to startle me with the message that my father had fallen down unconscious. I ran back with him, and Akshelah sped to her own people to summon them to the passing of the white man.

Father was stretched along his bed, his eyes shut, his face grey-white, and I heard his hard breathing before I had entered the house.

The lamp was lighted. I sat by my father's side, fanning the flies from his weird face.

"No good, boy," muttered Antoine. "The Spirit call him, an' he not say, 'I cannot.' He go."

I had no religion, beyond the native belief in the two great spirits, Good and Evil, therefore I was relieved when there came against the window the deep red glow of the death fires, and I heard the solemn chant of my Indian friends beating upward. Round the house went the Cree doctors in their official mummery, marching in a solemn circle, making their incantations to keep the devils at bay, their voices rising to a dreadful yell, then sinking abruptly into a mere shivering whisper.

MacCaskill entered, and seated himself largely upon the chest in the corner. He smoked all the time, but never spoke.

"Maidens!" called a deep voice, and straightway the clear sweet voices of the maids ascended, singing the prayer of commendation to the Spirit. I heard only one voice, the clearest and best, the voice of Akshelah, and as I listened I forgot the presence, and began to dream again.

A heavy hand came upon my shoulder.

"Stir yourself, Rupe; old man's away."

Antoine moved about slowly, setting the house in order. The death fires were burning out, and the Indians departed in solemn file. Although I had never been what is known as friendly with my father, I felt unmistakably alone.

"Maybe ye don't want to stop wi' that," went on the factor. "Come along over to the Fort, Rupe Petrie."

I started at hearing that name. "Petrie?" I muttered.

"Ay, that's your name. Old man went sudden, or maybe he'd have told ye."

Rousing myself, I went out with the factor, and we walked over to the Fort through the silver night.

We buried my father the next day under a big pine a stone's throw from the door, and Antoine heaped a mound to mark the spot. Akshelah stood with me beside the grave, her black hair wrapped in a red shawl as bright as her cheeks. We were alone.

"You will be lonely?" said she softly, her head to one side.

"I have you, and the factor, with your father and the tribe."

"Oh, yes," said the girl, and I saw that she was happy because I had named her first.

The evening found me turning out my father's chest. There were letters and papers, which he would probably have destroyed, had not death tripped him up so suddenly. As I could not read, these were of slight interest, if I except one ragged sheet, half covered with writing, and the other half containing a rough diagram, where I thought I made out sea and coast, with rocks and hills behind. Always anxious to learn, I smoked over this torn sheet for a long time, and even after I had lighted the lamp I turned

to it again. The letters I had put into a box and hidden.

It was a silent night. Antoine slept in the kitchen, and an electric storm might have passed leaving his slumbers unbroken. The door was open, and the smoke of the smudge hung between me and the night. I was about to go towards my bedroom, when my highly trained ears caught a sound, which was not made by any bird, or beast, or insect in the bush. I looked up, not afraid, but startled. I stepped forward, and put the lamp above my head. Through the flickering smoke I made out the figure of a man.

I took him to be an Indian, and called out in Cree. No answer came, but the man stood out from the smoke, and I then spoke to him in English, because I was sure he had mistaken my home for the Fort.

"An elderly gentleman of the name of Petrie lives here, I believe?" asked the stranger.

He was tall, loosely made, and his clothes hung on him badly. Unaccustomed to strange white people, I became confused.

"My father is outside now," I said, not for the moment realising that my words contained a meaning I never intended.

"Ah, yes. And where, may I ask?" The stranger's voice was smooth, and his manner deferential.

"Under the big pine."

I indicated the shadowy outline of the tree, and

immediately, to my great surprise, found myself alone. I had forgotten the sheet of paper, still spread out upon the table, and before I had collected my wits the man was back. He smiled at me with his large mouth, and looked over me with his cold eyes, making me more uncomfortable than I had ever felt before.

"I imagine it must be very easy to fool me," he observed gently. "I have been deceived by so many people, your good father among them, and you have fooled me with your first word." He smiled, still more guilelessly. "When did he die?"

"Yesterday," I answered, but while I said the word his eyes started like those of a starving man.

I was too quick for him. I was nearer the table, and I snatched away the sheet of paper, as his long hands pounced at it.

"I really believe that is my property," he said eagerly, yet backing indifferently. "My good fellow, I am positively convinced that is mine."

"No," I said simply.

The man felt in his pocket, and I suddenly picked up my unloaded gun.

"What are you about?" cried the stranger, with assumed horror. "Ah, you are Petrie's son, I can see, hot, headstrong, and impulsive, mistaking a friend for an enemy, just as he always did. You must know that I've been searching for your good father close upon twenty years, and wasting my life doing it. He stole that plan from me. It is terrible

to have to say so, but you require me to make good my claim. You know what it is, of course?"

I was quick-witted enough not to play into his hands.

"I know all about it," I lied firmly.

The man changed completely. He made a quick move, leaned forward, his hands upon the table, his eyes freezing at me.

"Partners?" he suggested.

I could hardly guess his meaning, but I went on playing my own game.

"All right," I answered.

He put out his long arm.

"We will make our arrangements in due time. For the present I must beg to retain my own property."

I hesitated, and in a moment my father's warning came. I looked at the flabby face, clean-shaven, with loose skin hanging in pouches.

"Tell me your name!" I called, but while my attention was distracted the long hungry fingers snatched the paper out of my hand.

"Redpath," said the man, as he left me.

THE ADVENTURERS

FOR the first time in my healthy life I knew what it was to want sleep. After my father's enemy had left me, taking that paper upon which he set so much store, I lay awake for hours. Despite my ignorance, I felt that the old idle life was done, that the new and stranger had already commenced, and the way ahead looked dark. At sunrise I went to the river and bathed, and after early breakfast set out for the Fort. MacCaskill was splitting logs in front of the store, and did not cease from his occupation while I was telling him of the coming of Redpath.

When I had done he sat down and refilled his pipe; after some storm-like puffs he asked me what I had made out of it, and when I helplessly shook my head, he spoke.

"What I know of your father ain't scarce worth talkin' about. He stopped here fifteen years, but kept himself buttoned up all the time. I knew his name. I knew he'd been a miner. I knew he was an Englishman. The rest is loose in me fancy. Like to hear?"

I was eager to hear anything, whether fact or fancy, and he went on:

"Ole Petrie never settled here, I guess, because he wanted solitude, nor yet because he liked it, but just because he was scared to live in the world. Lots like that, Rupe. He'd done something—or was suspected, and maybe wanted, and fancied he couldn't clear himself. This Redpath knows all about it. Likely he'd run your father into doing it."

"He was hiding from Redpath," I said.

The factor nodded.

"There's that bit o' paper," he muttered. "Why in Jerusalem didn't I have a sight of that! Then his firing that bag o' dirt into the river! Don't you see, Rupe? No, course you don't. He told me one time he wanted you kep' ignorant, or I'd have opened up your eyes long enough ago. Old man struck a rich pay-streak one time, and all he knew is set right down on that paper. Golden gates! Why wasn't I with ye last night? This Redpath has been hunting years for that secret."

"What is the use of the gold?" I said.

The factor swore.

"Sit down," he said hoarsely. "I'll tell ye what you ought to have known soon as you was able to balance upright."

Then he began to tell me something of the world—not the little outside world I had always lived in, but the great inside world which knew nothing of Yellow Sands, my home. He defined for me the two terms, poverty and wealth, and he told me incredible stories of lifelong struggle for that gold, which I had

despised as gaudy trinkets for an Indian maid. He went on to describe to me the meaning of many things this gold will procure.

The abstract of this new learning showed me that I was a savage, a heathen, a man of no account, because I was outside. Much that MacCaskill told me remained then beyond my mental grasp, but I was naturally shrewd, and certain stupendous facts became uncovered, and stared at me nakedly. The dose of understanding was so powerful that my head ached with it, and my throat went dry.

The factor stopped and wiped his mouth. I found the voice to mutter:

"What can I do?"

The big man looked me up and down.

"Follow Redpath," he said strongly.

The mere suggestion made me cold. My eyes rested upon the trees, the river and rocks, the Indian tepees, barely visible—all the surroundings that I had loved, and which had given me content, because I had thought the world had nothing better to offer.

"Leave Yellow Sands!" I exclaimed.

"Follow fortune," muttered the factor. "Look at Redpath," he went on warmly. "Fifty years old, I reckon, and maybe a villain in the first class. He's after fortune yet. You're twenty-one, though I allow you look five years older. You've got your chance. I know what you don't, that you're a grand specimen of a man. You can thank ole Petrie for

that. Ye must stay by Redpath, and keep a strong arm over him, 'cause he'll get ahead of you if he can; and if the gold pans out, and there's a claim to spare, maybe you'll mind ole Mac, who's put you up to a thing or two to-day. Then you can go to London, where you were born, finish your education, and, if you've got the stuff, do any durned thing you want."

"How did the man come?" I asked absently.

"Hudson Bay boat makin' to Pine Island, I guess. They dropped him at the mouth of our river, and he worked up. He can't get away till that boat comes back, which won't be for three weeks. Where is he, anyhow?"

I did not know myself. Redpath had disappeared as he came.

"He's got a camp in the bush. Look-a-here, Rupe. He don't want to see ye again. He's got what he came for—"

"He promised to be my partner," I interrupted.

MacCaskill frowned.

"I guess I'll be telling you now what sort of an insect a humbug is."

I listened, as the sun rose up in the sky, until there came to me a desire for liberty, and a longing to see those things of which the factor spoke. If I were a strong man, if I were qualified to take a place among others, why, surely I was wasted in Yellow Sands, and lost in the bush, among the animals and the Indians. It would be better to go, even though the

parting might make me unhappy for a time. MacCaskill went on :

"Antoine will go on livin' on the homestead. I'll be over once in a while, and if you do want to come back and waste like old man, why, you can. But you won't."

Then I went away to hunt for Redpath. I was as skilled in tracking as any Indian, so I quickly picked up the tracks at the entrance to the bush, and had commenced to follow them, when Akshelah walked sadly from among the trees. She had been tracking me.

"You are going away," she said at once, and there was no trace of a smile upon her face.

"Who told you?" I answered, feeling uncomfortable about her sorrow.

"When a white man goes away, he does not come back. Never! never! He goes to his own people, and they hold him, and he does not want to come back."

"Akshelah," I said, "my father is dead, and I must avenge him."

At once the girl's face changed, even as water will change when the sun falls across it. Vengeance was a religious duty in her creed, and she would regard the man who should allow a dead father to sleep unavenged as something lower than a coward. She smiled again, though the smile was still sad.

"When you have done your duty, you will come back?" she said very softly, and I gave her the

promise which her heart desired. "Those are bad men who came to you in the night," said she. "He who is tall, with the great face, is a man of lies. The little man, who has a white face like the belly of a fish, will be moved like sand when it is dry."

I looked from her expressive face down upon the well-beaten bush path. Now that she had spoken, I discovered the tracks of two men, and I also learnt that friends, as well as foes, had watched for me during the night.

"Listen," said the girl. "One of the young men saw your enemies coming over the sand where the river touches the great water, and he came to tell me. So I told the young man to follow, and he saw the tall man come to your tepee, but the little man watched where the bush begins. The tall man came back, and the two went away together."

I had moved on while Akshelah was speaking, but the girl's eyes were keener than mine that day. She picked up a half-burnt match, and called, "This way the men went." I joined her, and we passed on through the bush, seldom stopping, for Akshelah was never in doubt, and scarce an hour had gone before she whispered to me, "Smoke." Presently I, too, caught the acrid odour above the sweetness of the pines. We went on cautiously, until we heard the cracking of sticks in the fire, and soon we were beside the camp, and saw a tent set among the pines, and a small man crouching beside the fire. We walked out, and I called:

"Where is Redpath?"

The little man started round, and his uneasy eyes passed from me to the girl, and then on blankly to the bush.

"I am Rupe Petrie, his partner," I went on. "Has he gone to the Fort?"

"Gone shootin'," said the little man shortly. "Might a-gone to the Fort. Ain't my racket."

"Why are you camping in the bush?" I said "You can come to my shanty."

"You may be eaten by flies here," added Akshelah, somewhat as though she hoped the thing might come to pass.

The little man made a shuffling reply, and Akshelah availed herself of his discomfort.

"You are his servant," she said, with much scorn. "I would not be that man's servant if I were a man."

The listener flushed faintly, and poked at his fire, but he would not give any answer, so I made to go.

"I have lots of food at the homestead," I said. "If Redpath wants any he can come for it. I will share with him as I said I would." And with these words we came away.

That evening I went to clean out the cow-byre, and while thus occupied I saw the tall figure of Redpath come clear of the bush, and after a certain hesitation, proceed towards my home. I was about to go out and meet him, when the lessons I had received from MacCaskill that day advised me to alter my mind. Obviously the man had come to discuss

his plans, and it would only require a few questions for him to discover that I was in complete ignorance of what was written on the paper he had taken from my hand the previous night. I slipped at once round the building, and passed down to the river, and on to the native encampment. On my return Antoine informed me that Redpath had asked for some fresh meat, and had taken away with him the greater part of a quarter of moose.

At the dead of night another visitor came to me. I was aroused from sleep by a voice whispering hoarsely about the house, and when I had struck a light a small figure came towards me from the door, and I saw the white shifting face of Olaffson, the Icelander, for that was the name of the little man we had found by the camp fire in the bush. He made a warning motion, and then sat down beside me.

"Say, have you spoke wi' Redpath?" he muttered. I was still so surprised at the strangeness of this visit that I did not answer him at once, and he went on: "He's no pard of mine, see. I'm with him for what I make. If I came over to you I should make more, eh?"

"This is a trick of Redpath's," I said angrily, forcing myself up. "He's waiting outside now?"

"He's sleepin' like a dead man," said the Icelander. "See now. He got that paper from you, and he knows what's on it. You know. I don't. He carries it on him by day, an' hides it nights. What d'yer say, eh?"

He little thought that I was as ignorant as himself.

"So you want to give your friend away?" I said.

"Redpath ain't no friend of mine," said the little scoundrel. You ain't either; but I surmise you'd pay me better'n he has. I'm square when I get good pay."

His white face gleamed unpleasantly by my bedside.

"You want me to show you the place where the gold is?" I suggested, making a double hazard.

"That's right. We'd go together an' fight off Redpath, see! You're strong. We'd work the place, share and share, or each for hisself. Redpath don't mean you or me neither to have any."

"There's enough for all of us," I said, again at a venture.

"That don't do for Redpath. He never could share. Gimme a ear, pard. No listeners."

The little wretch put his horrid face close to mine, and whispered the shocking proposal that, as a consideration for my letting him into the secret, he should murder Redpath in his sleep.

I rose in horror, but when I threatened to throw him out of the house, the Icelander grinned at me.

"Killin' a man in the bush ain't much of a job," he muttered.

"Get out!" I said. "Get out!"

Olaffson backed slowly.

"If I ain't wi' you, I'm wi' Redpath," he threatened.

"If you were with me, you would sell me to someone else."

"Not if you paid me well."

"Take yourself out of the place!" I cried angrily; and the little scoundrel went.

By this I made myself the enemy of Olaffson, the Icelander.

Midway between my homestead and the native encampment lay an open space, where grass and flowers grew strongly, and butterflies played throughout the day. This had always been a favourite spot of mine. On the river side an untenanted ant-mound had become covered by natural green, and this afforded a very comfortable resting-place for one, and a possible one for two, as Akshelah and I had proved. It was our favourite meeting-place, and in order that it might not become invaded by the bush, I had lately given a day to lopping back the encroaching branches and tendrils, and cutting off the shoots of young trees which here and there had tried to take possession in the grass.

Upon the following afternoon, or it might have been the early evening, for I seem to remember that the sun was coming low, I was running to this open space—running, because I had promised to meet Akshelah, and I was well after the appointed time. I had been delayed at the Fort. Truth to tell, MacCaskill was teaching me my letters, and my eagerness to learn was so great that I had temporarily forgotten my beautiful country maid. I was nearing

our patch of natural garden, when I heard the sudden sound of a human struggle.

The trained ear does not mistake such sounds, nor can it confuse them with the stir made by animals fighting or at play. For one moment I stopped, that I might be sure of my bearings, but while thus motionless, a cry rang startlingly forth, not of fear, but in defiance, and it was the cry of Akshelah; but it was cut short, as though a hand had closed upon her throat.

I had never known what it was to lose control over my strength, but I had learnt much since my father's death, so that it became merely fitting for the animal side of my nature to receive its lesson. The trees seemed to rise and float away from me; a hot hand inside my body jumped up to my throat; a mist closed before my eyes, and the sunlight appeared to glint with a red glow. I felt my feet flying under me, and the bushes giving or breaking as they went by.

I sprang panting over the ant-mound, and two figures resolved themselves out of the mist—Akshelah fighting upon her knees, a thin line of blood joining her nostril and lip, and over her the tall, leaning figure of Redpath, his great hands holding her throat, his eyes hideous, and his flabby face white and slimy. I was mad. I was a wild beast, with no control, and with no human knowledge.

I crossed the interval of grass at one bound—another; and while I descended, I struck out with my

left arm, and my wiry fingers met the dull, loose flesh of the adventurer with the hard shock of a great bullet smashing into a tree. I threw myself after the blow, and when that terrible heat of rage and brute strength had cooled, I was sprawling across the body of Redpath, and he was stretched as he fell, making a strange shape along the grass.

Akshelah wiped the blood from her face, and as I rose, she came upon me; and when I clasped her pretty body in my arms, she kissed me passionately. And while she kissed me, I wondered how it was that men set so much store upon gold.

I lifted Redpath's head. He was breathing heavily; his skin was cold, and to touch it was like handling a fish.

"Run to the encampment, little squirrel," I said, calling Akshelah affectionately after her totem. "Send a boy to bring the Icelander here."

The girl came up to me, deliberately wreathed her warm arms about my neck, lightly caressed my forehead with hers, and went quickly to do my bidding, without a word.

Then I removed from Redpath's breast-pocket a case, which contained the well-preserved piece of paper that had belonged to my father. Sitting upon the ant-mound, my body still quivering from its late passion, I awaited the coming of the Icelander.

So I made myself the enemy of Redpath, the Englishman.

A LAND OF HIDDEN TREASURE

THE voices of the bush sang a changed song during my night walk. The moon came out over the ridges and lit up the flagstaff, and faintly illumined the thread of smoke ascending from the single stove-pipe chimney of the Fort.

I walked across the furrowed fire-break, where a few pink briars lingered, and opened the door of the low, whitewashed building, with the lack of ceremony to which I had always been accustomed.

MacCaskill sat at his table, making entries in a big ledger. He looked up morosely, nodded, and his big head went again over his writing.

"Three gallons fish-oil," he muttered, speaking each word as he set it down, "at one blanket, value four, seventy-five. Profits ain't what they was when furs were plentiful. Well, what's the latest racket?"

I came over to his side and opened the sheet of paper upon the table, smoothing the ragged edges with my flat hand.

The factor's face changed, and he stopped drawing in his smoke, but looked up from the table and scanned me narrowly.

"Which goes to say," he said in a deep voice,

"that you and Redpath have been havin' a match, and you've come in Number One."

"Not a word has passed between us," I said.

"Give me deeds every time," muttered MacCaskill.

He brought his head nearer the table, and I waited for his next word. "Bonanza" was that word; and then a silence came between us, until the factor left his seat, and stood upright against the stove.

"What does it mean?" I exclaimed.

MacCaskill drew a sulphur match along the top of the stove, and let it splutter and burn until the flame touched his fingers. Then he dropped it unused.

"You're twenty-one, and I'm sixty-five. You're fresh, and I'm spoilt. You've got everything before you, and all mine's 'way behind. There's that difference between us." Then he burst out: "I don't know that a man can get too old for this one thing. I've had a bad, lonely, useless life." He struck another match violently, flung it away, as though he tried to throw off his weight of years. "Darn me if I don't begin all over again!" He came to me, his great face agitated. "Redpath asked you to be his pard, did he? You've broke with him to-night; and if you want another pard, he's right here before you. Is it a go?"

He gave me his strong hand, and I knew that I had won a friend.

Then he spoke to me regarding Bonanza, the place of gold, my father's secret, while I told him of my

meeting with Redpath, and of the punishment I had given him.

"For a woman!" the factor said grimly. "Wait till you know the world, and you'll find that the woman comes in everywhere. Watch out when you're walkin' lone in the bush, and fasten your door nights. Redpath won't forget that knock-down; and mind, you're standin' in his way all the time."

I asked him what he thought of Olaffson, and he answered with scorn:

"Just a crooked tool. He'd stick a knife into his brother if there was anything comin' to him for the job."

The factor reached for his straw bonnet, and announced his intention of going down to the encampment.

"I must get one of the boys to start first thing in the morning, to take a message along to Fort Determination. I want someone to take my place here right away," he explained. "Redpath 'll have to wait for the *Lac Seul*. We'll go by canoe, and get ahead of him at the start."

We had not left the sparkling river, after visiting the native encampment, when MacCaskill asked abruptly:

"Anything else in that chest of your ole father's, Rupe? Always been thinkin' of it when you weren't handy?"

What a fool I had been! I had completely forgotten that packet of letters, after I had taken and

hidden them in a box under the floor. My companion proposed that he should come at once and examine them, so we turned off into the bush, where the dew showed like points of light, and on to my homestead, which was dark and silent, for Antoine was already asleep. Entering, I closed the door, and after lighting the lamp I dug out the box, and handed its contents over to MacCaskill.

One by one he glanced them through, and pronounced them for the most part unimportant.

"No use worryin' out old man's back life," he said. "Most o' these are from his gal, your mother, addressed to him at Seymour Place, Hyde Park, London, England. A copy of his marriage certificate. Another of your baptism. Better keep that. You don't know what it means, but you will one time, maybe, if you strike a missionary. Now, here's something a bit different: 'Your sincere friend, Francis Redpath'; headed, 'Forsyth Mansions, Victoria Street.' P'r'aps that is London again. Golden Jerusalem! He's promising to be your father's best man; postscript, 'Anything from J. F.?'"

MacCaskill's busy fingers pulled out another letter, and, as he read, he fell into indistinctness. At last his hands dropped.

"Shall I tell you, lad, or shall I just say it's bad and burn it, and leave you to guess?"

"Tell me," I said, as anyone else would have done.

The factor picked up the letter, and read:

"'It is common knowledge that you killed Joe Fagge that night, and there will be as little mercy for you as you showed to that poor old devil, when you are taken. You have deceived and ruined me, and though you are at present out of my reach, you must know, my good Petrie, that I shall find you, if I hunt long enough. I have set my mind upon having the old man's secret, and I shall have it. If you try to withhold it from me, I am afraid I shall have to kill you. Remember me. I don't give up a search, if I fail twenty times.'"

The factor folded up the sheet.

"That's enough," he said. "No address. I guess it was brought to ole Petrie by someone who wouldn't give his hiding-place away. Now we know why he wasted his life away here. I thought maybe 'twas something like it, and Redpath's got here, as he said he would, though he didn't get in until old man had his notice to quit."

His words came booming at my ears.

"Father was never a murderer," I said.

"I knew old man, and now I know Redpath. If I was asked to pick out the murderer, I wouldn't stop to choose. Now here's something else. Golden gates! Listen, Rupe. Listen to this."

He read out slowly:

"'The true statement of James Petrie.' That's your father, lad. That's old man. And this is

gospel, for he never wanted it to be read while he was alive. Listen to this, I tell ye."

I was listening with both my ears, while the night quivered and murmured around my home. MacCaskill began to read:

"'It was late in the fall of 1874 when Joe Fagge made his accidental discovery of Bonanza. He was accompanied only by the half-breed Leblanc, who was in camp when the old man made the great find of the hole, and who was kept in ignorance, I imagine, of the whole thing. As it was too late to do anything until the next season, Fagge returned south, and settled to winter in Portage la Prairie, where he came against Redpath, who at the time was speculating in land, and, as usual, doing no good. Both he and I knew Fagge well enough, and we had often received from him useful hints regarding promising localities for gold-finding.

"'The old man was the cleverest, and most eccentric, miner in the whole north-west; but in that winter of 1874 his brain began to fail, and when given a little liquor he could be brought to talk about his one great discovery. Redpath knew his weakness, and kept close to the old man to hinder him from giving away the secret to others; but Joe had a violent dislike for Redpath, and refused to give him any details as to the bearings of Bonanza.

"'I had just returned to the west, as my young wife had died shortly after Rupert's birth. I had spent

all my money again, and came out to find another good digging along the gold line. Redpath sent for me from Portage la Prairie, but when I got up, Joe Fagge was little better than a madman. I kept with him, and chained him up, metaphorically speaking; but it was tough work looking after him and my little Rupert, babies both, for the old man was always crying for liquor. Redpath and I had quarrelled pretty badly just before—not for the first time. His cynicism was intolerable. I had not been what one would call a particularly straight man myself, and I knew he wasn't much better than a scoundrel; but on the "honour among thieves" principle we hung together, and I trusted him part of the way.'"

MacCaskill turned over the leaf, and read on, his face hidden. My eyes looked over him, and rested upon the window.

"'Joe improved a lot as the winter went out, and finally he consented to take me to Bonanza, although he would not hear of Redpath accompanying us. The break-up came early that year, and we were able to start in April. We hired a boat, but it pinched to find the money—miners are poor in the spring—and set out from Selkirk, getting safely out of the river, and away, though we found a lot of loose ice floating about the lake. Our crew consisted of Joe, Leblanc, a couple of nitchies, and myself. A boat which followed ours held Redpath and his man Olaffson. I had arranged with him to wait off the coast, until the old man had told me all he knew. I marked the

course carefully as we came along, and set it down in writing; but it was plain sailing until we came under the coast, where Joe had forgotten a good deal, and we had to try a lot of places before he could recognise the shape of the beach. Leblanc, a half-breed of the worst class, was of no use. On the previous occasion they had come overland to the shore, and then worked back. The key of the discovery lay in the finding of a tunnel out of a canyon, which we called the Canyon of the North Wind, taking us through cliffs of a perfectly inaccessible nature. This pass the old man had named Mosquito Hole, and this is the name I have given it upon my map. . . .'"

MacCaskill pushed himself back. My attention had been led astray, and the closing sentences of my father's narrative had been lost upon me.

"The other half of the sheet's torn away," said the factor morosely. "Just as we were comin' to the excitement. Old man must have thought better of it. Maybe he tore it by accident. There's no more yarn, anyhow."

"Don't move," I said softly. "There's trouble. I have seen a face against the window."

MacCaskill suddenly pulled a quick breath, then, throwing his body forward, burst into a hearty shout of laughter.

"Seen anything?" he muttered, after a pause.

"A shadow passed. The moon's bright."

"And Redpath's worryin' over the knock-down you gave him."

The factor gave another loud laugh, then, getting up, pulled the blanket, which did duty for a blind, across the window. When we were concealed he turned and snatched up my late father's old gun, while I caught at and loaded mine.

"We can step out by the window at the back," I said.

"Leave the lamp burnin'. That'll fool 'em."

Passing into the kitchen, we shook up Antoine, who slept in his clothes. I carefully pushed aside the mosquito netting, and climbed through the window, which lay in darkness, for the shadow of the house fell that way, and a bluff of small pines grew right back to the wall. My companions followed, and we glided among the trees, climbed the snake fence, and entered the scrub, with the idea of working round, to watch from the bush what might be taking place in front of the house. I led the way, because I knew every inch of the ground, and MacCaskill followed, breathing like an ox, and Antoine came sleepily third. I had just reckoned that another twenty paces would bring us clear of the scrub, when I smelt smoke, and through the trees came a quick flash without noise, and the unmistakable odour of gunpowder. The factor gave a hard snort of rage, and Antoine muttered heavily, "Burn! Burn!"

"That's powder out of their cartridges," said

MacCaskill. "Bet you they're watchin' that door, and think we're trapped."

Some rocks were scattered outside the bush, and behind one of these we took up our stand; a volume of smoke rolled over the ground, and when it had passed I saw a series of flames darting up and out suddenly. My home, the little log shanty that my father had made for a refuge, was burning, and it was useless to think of trying to save it. The loss of the shanty was in itself a small matter, because another equally good could be run up in a day, with the aid of my Indian friends; my few possessions were of very trivial value; but associations cling about a building, be it only a bush hut, when it has always been one's home. I felt, for the second time that day, the hot, unreasoning strength coming over me from head to foot, and I rested my gun upon the shoulder of the rock when I saw a tall figure standing beside the door, leaning forward, and waiting, hoping for revenge.

"Don't do it, Rupe," said the deep voice behind me. "That sort of thing leaves a bad taste all a man's life. Meet a rascal to his face, and knock hell into him, but don't skunk behind a rock and pump lead his way, like he was a jack-rabbit."

"Are we going to stand here?" I said, in a voice unlike my own.

"We'll watch 'em away. You can't save the shanty, boy, and if we go out you'll make at Redpath. I'll have to take on Olaffson for sympathy,

and there'll be a lot of trouble. You've got well out of this, and you don't want to spoil the game now."

The logs of my late home were cracking and splitting under the fire. Antoine was more philosophic than I, and accepted the inevitable with his customary indifference. The flames wrapped round the shanty, and the dry thatch roared, putting out the light of the moon. Then the roof smashed down, with an upburst of fireworks, and the two dark figures, the tall and the short, came together, and sneaked away, with backward glances.

My arms twitched again, and I must have made a threatening movement, because a great hairy hand seized the barrel of my gun. The figures became swallowed up, and we three were alone again.

"Say, Rupe"—MacCaskill moved back a pace, and put out his two thick arms—"I'm sixty-five, and I guess Redpath's the wrong side o' fifty. How should we go? If we stood together, wi' our sleeves up, and wi' tight waists, how would we go, eh?"

"It would be bad for Redpath," I growled, and Antoine grunted his assent.

We three went back to the Fort. In the morning came Akshelah to tell me that a canoe belonging to the chief had been stolen during the night. Aided by a fresh north wind, which sprang up with the dawn, Redpath and Olaffson had made good their escape. At the time my maid spoke, the incendiaries would have been well away upon Lake Whispering.

II

THE LUMBER CAMP OF GULL ISLAND

LIFE!

THE men of all nations occupied the station of Gull, a summer camp upon an island bearing the same name, but the majority were Norwegians and half-breeds, with a sprinkling of natives, the latter a degraded and treacherous set, resembling my own Indians about as nearly as a red lily resembles a choke-weed.

Some hotels stood upon the island, making their profits by the saloon, where some four hundred men weekly liquidated their pay. The "shelters" were all upon the island, which a shingle beach half a mile wide connected with the mainland, and along this beach curved a railway, which conveyed the prepared lumber down to the wharf of Gull Harbour, where it was shipped into scows. The sawmills were stationed along the main beach, and here the chimneys sent out their smoke, and the buzz-saws whirled seven days to the week, because the season was short.

The *Lac Seul* of the Hudson Bay Company had carried MacCaskill and myself as far as Waterhen, and we had made the portage of fifty-seven miles from that point to the shores of Lake Peace on foot.

I was frightened at the sight of so many faces, and bewildered by the noise and devilry of the camp; but my companion fortunately knew where to go, and I followed him closely, as though I had been his dog.

We put up at the Tecumseh House, and the factor took me about to accustom me to the novelty of my environment. In winter this settlement would be heaped up with snow and icebergs, and the only inhabitants would be a few Norwegians, left to look after the machinery, with sufficient supplies to last them until the following May. There were no women in the lumber camp, only men, and a bad crowd of them, according to the factor.

I could not sleep in the Tecumseh House because of the all-night noise of the card-players, and the shouts and threats of drunkards, and at last I gave up the attempt. It was quite dark, although near morning, when I rose and dressed, and was about to leave the room when MacCaskill came to comprehend what I was doing. I explained that I could not sleep, and had made up my mind to go out and walk into the forest, that I might feel myself at home again.

"Watch yourself," he grunted sleepily. "It's a bad crowd hereabouts. If any feller speaks to ye awkward, ask him what he wants after you've knocked him down."

The hotel door stood wide open night or day, the entrance only guarded by a wire mosquito frame.

All about the hall were men, either lying in chairs or sprawling upon the floor, in various stages of sleep, and all fully dressed.

It was an unusually cold morning considering the season. A heavy vapour hung upon the east to proclaim the nearness of the dawn. The air was wringing with moisture; but when I reached the track my ears became gladdened by the pleasant booming of the water along the shore. Before me a few shadowy trees dripped and shivered. I shivered myself at the miserable prospect, and, for very loneliness, stopped to light my pipe, longing all the time for my little home above Yellow Sands.

It was only natural that I should desire to reach the solitude which life and custom had made me love, and I felt relieved when the last shelter had been left behind, and I felt myself alone on the neck of shingle between wind and water. Suddenly my foot went from under me, and I discovered that I had slipped upon an iron rail. I had forgotten the railway track which carried the lumber from the main beach, until I saw a red eye peering through the mist, and in the interval the metals gleaming in the cold half-light, with beyond some low black cars, all dripping with moisture, like silent monsters that had crawled there from the lake to sleep.

I walked on, and had reached the side of these open cars, when I became startled by a shadow which rose overhead, and I made out a brown-bearded face, crowned by a ragged, wet straw

bonnet, the chin resting upon two filthy hands clutching the top of the car.

"Mornin', stranger!" called this apparition.

The man was well out of my reach. So far as I could judge, from the lack of light and the little I saw of him, he was dressed in the discoloured canvas which I had already learnt was the costume of the sailors upon the inland sea of Lake Peace. I replied very shortly to his salutation, and was for passing on, when the tenant of the car shifted, and said:

"Gimme a match!"

An unmistakable rustling reached my ears, and I said as boldly as I could:

"That's straw you're lying on."

"Jest a bunch, an' leetle enough for sich a night," grumbled the man, beating his cold hands together. "I'm 'most fruze. If I was to make a move, sudden-like, I'd have some of me bones snap. You're around early, stranger, or late, maybe. Ben playin' poker?"

I made a step away.

"Gimme a match, jest to start me bit o' plug. It's lonesome fixed here without a pard. Here's half a pipe-load, an' it'll smoke good. Don't ye be scared of a blaze this wet mornin'."

Somehow I did not intend to yield to his pleading, and went on my way, whereupon the sailor changed his tactics, and shouted:

"You're the mean pard of the white-face Ice-lander skunk what went by jest now. He swore at me when I spoke him perlite, 'Gimme a match, pard,'

and I swore at him back. You're a pair of loose cat-fish!"

I did not know at the time that the phrase, "a loose cat-fish," signified upon Lake Peace a man's supreme contempt for an adversary; I only observed the phrase, "a white-face Icelander," and that was enough to stop me. We had heard nothing of Redpath or his accomplice, although MacCaskill was confident that they must have proceeded to Gull Island, which was the nearest point in communication with our common destination.

"Which way did he go?" I said, turning back.

The sailor rubbed the moisture from his heavy eyebrows.

"We're startin' to shout!" he said, with a husky laugh. "Gimme a match."

I took a few sulphur matches from my pocket, and passed them into the grimy hand.

"Me mem'ry's sorter wakin'," went on the sailor cheerfully, "but a dollar bill would live it along surprisin'."

I saw that I was being made a fool of, so I said sharply:

"Are you going to tell me which way the Icelander went?"

"Not unless you show silver," said the sailor, pulling a match along his leg. "We can't work for nothin' in hard times."

"I haven't got a cent on me," I said, and it was the truth. I might also have added, with equal truth,

that I had never owned a cent of cash in my life.

"He's only jest got by," the man said temptingly. "When I heard ye, I thought 'twas him a-comin' back to apologise, an' a-beggin' me acceptance of a paper o' matches."

I had played enough poker at home with my father and MacCaskill to have acquired the first principles of bluff. Had I not already succeeded with Redpath?

"I guess he went this way," I said, moving off in the direction of the mainland.

"You'll get left," said the sailor, puffing contentedly. "See here, stranger! Yer pard's gone along inter the town. That's truth, for givin' me the m[illegible]ches."

I swung round, and went on the way I had intended, leaving the sailor cursing in the car.

Light began to prevail over the shadows as I approached the mainland beach, where great piles of prepared lumber for the markets of the world awaited shipment. Above and around, thousands of those white birds which had named the neighbourhood filled the air with the noise of their wings and their screams. It was difficult to make rapid progress, because the shingle was littered with logs, and the light was shifting and uncertain. The saw-mills took shape before me, and the half-wrecked forest gaped behind. Then a short figure began to dodge about a sheltered angle made by the wall of the nearest machine-shed, and I felt sure I had recognised my

man. Coming up as quickly as I could, I thought for the moment that the rascal was trying to set fire to the shed, but when I was almost up, I encountered the stiff breeze from the lake, and understood that he was getting a light for his pipe. He was bending his back towards me; a tiny red flame shot up, and a cloud of smoke followed. The next instant I was behind him, cutting off the only way of retreat, and, while his head was still down, I called "Olaffson!"

The pipe was dashed against the corner of the shed, and fell to the shingle. An exclamation of dismay followed, not from his lips, but from mine. Before me was not the white face of Olaffson, but the dark, heavy countenance of a half-breed whom I had never seen before. I hurriedly concluded that this stranger knew Olaffson, had possibly just parted from him, the Icelander returning to the settlement, as the sailor had said, and this man coming on to the mills.

"I made sure you were Olaffson," I said coolly, as the half-breed bent to reclaim his pipe. "Has he gone back to the camp?"

The man looked at me stupidly.

"What d'yer want wi' Olaffson?" he muttered at last.

"I just want to know how far you are in with him and Redpath."

The half-breed shifted, and avoided my gaze.

"Redpath ain't here," he growled.

I began to be delighted with myself, and went on with increased confidence:

"I know where he is." This shot had no effect, but I remembered the Icelander's character, and suggested meaningly: "You're in with Olaffson against Redpath."

The half-breed again moved awkwardly, and growled:

"That ain't so."

"I know Olaffson," I said.

Possibly these simple words contained a meaning beyond my understanding. The man glanced towards me wildly, then dropped his eyes, and kicked sullenly at the wooden scantling, his face wearing that grey pallor which betokens fear in a half-black.

"And I guess you know me," I went on. "My name is Petrie."

That beat him. He turned shivering, and edged away, his face ghastly.

"Lemme go," he whined. "I never done it. You can't bring it up agin me. I tell ye I didn't have a hand in it. Lemme go, *sir*."

Mentally blindfolded, I fumbled for the truth.

"Don't you tell me you haven't seen Olaffson this morning," I said.

"He's on the island," admitted the breed. "I saw him las' night."

"And Redpath, too."

But the man gave a strong denial. He declared he had not set eyes upon the English adventurer for years, and I was constrained to believe him, because I could see that he was terribly afraid of Redpath.

"What's your name?" I said sharply.

Success had made me too bold. The question displayed the weakness of my hand, and dull as the man might be, he was quick enough to see the blunder. He stared at me in his owlish fashion, and muttered hopefully:

"You ain't Petrie."

"I guess so," I said, feeling myself weaken.

"Let me out er this," said the half-breed roughly.

He pushed by me with contempt, and I was too crestfallen to oppose him. In any case I could not have used force, because the day had broken, and men were already coming along the neck connecting Gull with the mainland. The breed slouched away towards the saw-mills, and I walked back to Tecumseh House, where I found MacCaskill starting his breakfast. When I had reported, he said:

"A half-breed, eh? I'll go one better, and put a name to him. Don't ye mind old man's statement? That feller's name will be Leblanc, the 'half-breed of the worst class.'"

Directly the factor spoke I remembered, but the chance had passed.

All day we kept to ourselves, considering our plans; but after dark the factor impressed upon me the necessity of mixing with the crowd, as otherwise the inhabitants of Gull might conceive the idea that we imagined ourselves superior to them, and that is the way which leads to unpopularity.

To me this summer camp, with its stores and saloons, was a great, bustling centre of life, and I thought myself quite one of the world's citizens; but when I asked my partner if Gull at all resembled the town of London, where I had first seen the light, he doubled up with laughter.

"Why, lad, this is only a bit of a lumber camp. You should see London, Ontario, me boy, where things do keep on the buzz. And they say that London, Ontario, ain't in the same gang of flies wi' London, England."

Suddenly the lamp-lighted night-dens began to disgorge their occupants; and when everyone set their faces towards Gull Harbour, the factor stopped a flaxen-haired Swede, and asked him the reason of the excitement. He returned to me with the information that the steamship *Carillon* was just drawing into harbour, while the residents were turning out to put themselves into communication, so far as they might, with the outer world.

"She's the boat we're going by," said my partner.

We joined the rough-voiced crowd of all nations, and came to the round, slippery logs that made the landing-stage.

To me the scene resembled a vivid dream rather than any picture of human activity. The big ship moved in slowly, her lights flickering, and presently the ropes, like lithe brown snakes, sped uncoiling through the air. Everything was silvered with wet, because clouds of spray swept continually over the wharf, and

the wind freshened even while we waited. Hanging to the rough poles, above the waves that were breaking and creaming over the stones, a few greasy lanterns swayed; and in the conflict of lights hundreds of gulls circled, screamed wildly, and dropped upon the water like huge snowflakes, or wheeled away into the outer darkness. Behind the settlement tiers of black rock went up, backed by ascending terraces of sweeping trees of soft wood, right away to the dark-blue sky-line; and between, where the waves were flung upon the crags, I saw innumerable points of light lit by the fire-flies, darting, going out, and starting again into light. The gangways ran out, and the canvas-clad sailors were quickly at work, rolling provision barrels over the greasy logs to an accompaniment of shouts and dialect chatter. A few bundles of newspapers were dispersed, and here and there an eager group had formed to discuss the news of the world by aid of one of the lanterns.

Presently a voice shouted close beside us:

"Watch yerselves, boys, here's the mission-airy!"

"What's that?" MacCaskill called, pushing forward, while I followed, unwilling to be left.

"Father Lacombe, of Three Points," said one of the sailors, flinging a barrel up on end, and spitting on his hands before clutching another.

While he spoke I caught sight of the large, black figure of the first priest I had ever seen, stepping carefully over the logs. He was wearing a hard felt hat, and his cassock was fastened up behind by

means of a safety-pin; I caught the glint of this tiny article as the priest walked away towards the settlement of Gull.

"Three Points Mission. That's across Peace," said MacCaskill, turning to me. "P'r'aps he'll cross wi' us."

Father Lacombe walked away leisurely, his valise tucked under his arm, his cape flapping in the strong breeze, and when darkness had closed after him the crowd began to jeer.

SOME HUMAN NATURE

ON the following morning (Sunday), MacCaskill took me into the Star saloon, the foregathering place-in-chief of the lumbermen, in order to introduce me to some human character. The bar was filled with men who had religious scruples against working on Sunday, all in peaceful mood, reading the newspapers that had come with the *Carillon*, or commenting upon the doings of many a country and many a personage whose names I now heard for the first time. It was not etiquette to gamble before noon. A regular gale was blowing at the time, and heavy rain lashed the tin roofing.

Overhead, a lighted lamp swayed, its yellow glass fogged in smoke, which wreathed everything; the odour of this smoke, combined with that of the liquors, and the chewing of black tobacco, was sufficient to almost intoxicate a saloon tyro; but, fortunately, my manner of life had been so healthy that I experienced no inconvenience beyond a certain unpleasantness in getting my breath. The factor paid our footing, and we were established and introduced as good citizens of the town of Gull by the simple process of drinking with the crowd.

Presently my companion nudged me.

"Do ye mind yon feller?" he said, nodding towards the end of the bar, where two men, one tall and elderly, the other fat and middle-aged, stood smoking very black cigars. "The feller wi' black and white hair? That's Bob Lennie, captain of the *Carillon*. Come across."

We joined the two men, and the factor introduced me.

"What'll ye have?" said the captain at once.

A bottle was pushed across the sloppy bar, and we helped ourselves, although I did little more than flavour the water with the hot corn whisky, which I thought the most nauseous compound I had ever tasted. By this time I began to understand why men would run mad at the suggestion of gold; but that they should care to wreck their bodies for the sake of such horrible stuff as that biting liquor, as the factor assured me they did, was to me incredible.

"This is my mate," Lennie was saying. "Sandy, boy, here's Andy MacCaskill and Rupe Petrie from Yellow Sands. You're comin' across, eh? Well, we're going north quite a piece, an' comin' back wi' a cargo of fish. We'll be gettin' away for the Little Peace in maybe five days' time, if this dirty weather don't hold."

I had seen few men, but I could not have imagined any stranger-looking than Bob Lennie. His cadaverous face was cross-hatched with innumerable lines, his eyes were dark and wild, his hair partly coal-

black, and partly silver-grey. He stooped a good deal, but he was well over sixty. He was the father of north-west navigators, and nearly every part of the treacherous inland sea of Lake Peace, its hidden reefs and shoals and silt-bars, were to him an open book.

"Not many passengers these days, I guess?" hinted MacCaskill, when we had found a corner to ourselves.

Sandy, the mate, smuggled beside me, and launched himself into a discussion of something which he called the silver question in the United States; but I could do nothing except listen, throwing in a monosyllable of sheer ignorance occasionally. He was quite content to monopolise the conversation, while I listened to the captain and my partner. The former was saying, in answer to the latter's question:

"A few new hands comin' out to the fisheries, and a preacher once in a while. Say, we picked up Father Lacombe yesterday morning, and he's paid on to the Little Peace."

"Where did ye strike him, anyhow?" asked MacCaskill.

"We was passin' White River, an' he signalled. Said he'd packed down to the coast after a mission-airy journey upland, wi' a couple of nitchies, who took themselves off in the night wi' all his supplies. I said to him, 'Don't ye want to find them thieves, father?' 'Course not,' he said. 'It's a punishment

to me for havin' taught 'em badly.' Lord, Mac! don't these preachers talk soft!"

The two men laughed together.

"He's quite a priest down east, they tell me," went on Lennie.

"Saw him come ashore," said MacCaskill. "He don't look strong on fasting Fridays."

"They do say the less some men do eat the fatter they do get. It's one of those things they call a parridox. But what's the father wantin' around Gull at all?"

"No, siree!" shouted the little mate at my ear. "What's the silver standard? Explain to me the value of free silver. In what way, sir, is the silver dollar better than the paper? Tell me that."

It was impossible for me to enlighten him, and I said so.

"I guess you're right," the captain said. "The father's come to look around, wi' the idea of startin' a mission. There ain't enough of his religion hereabouts to make it a going concern."

"Lots of half-breeds," suggested the factor.

"Well, but they ain't got religion. Maybe the father'll be preaching some place to-night. I ain't religious meself, but I like an opera, and I wonderful well like to hear a sermon, if there's lots o' blood and fire about it."

"Say, Mister Petrie, are ye a Republican or a Democrat?" demanded the rasping voice I had almost come to ignore.

I turned to the mate, and assured him that I was neither.

"You're a neutral, eh? Well, I don't hold wi' neutrality, which jest means scrappin' wi' everyone. I like to scrap for me own party."

"Do I mind Joey Fagge? Why, course I do. There ain't any old-timer who can't tell you something 'bout him. He was the cutest ole Sam-Peter west, and they tell how he could smell out gold, same as these miracle chaps down south fetch water outer the ground, or shoot it outer the sky, or some such durned trick. No one knows where he finished, though I've heard tell how he got caught in a storm on this very lake and was drownded."

"Did he die rich?"

"Ever heard of a miner who did?" said the captain, laughing hoarsely. "Last time I saw Joey he was flyin' off the handle in Main Street, Fort Garry. Seems some American chap had bested him upon a real estate bargain, an' the old man took that sort of thing bad. He was a good-natured ole chap too. I know that, 'cause I was in Garry time of the boom, and I know a yarn if you want to listen."

The mate was besieging my ear, but my attention was not for him. I edged towards Bob Lennie, that I might hear all I could concerning the man my father had been accused of murdering.

"A young Englishman came inter Garry 'bout the middle of the fun," went on the captain. "Ye see, he fancied he was goin' to look out for a job, but when

he saw the cash an' champagne-water a-flowin' around, an' found lots o' folks happy to stand him drinks and leave him the change if he wanted it, he started to quit his thoughts of work, an' surmised he'd struck an almightily soft way of living. Time came, of course, when he found himself gettin' left dry on the rocks, an' as he hadn't near enough at the week-end to fix up his hotel bill, he nat'rally walked into the bar at mornin' wi' the idea of runnin' outer what he *had* got. After takin' a doctor's prescription, he moved 'way up the street, spoilin' for excitement, an' presently he pulled up at Central Hall, where a big real-estate sale was going on. The boy's brain must have ben a bit in wool, 'cause he started biddin' for a parcel of land, and sudden-like the lot was knocked down to him. D'rectly he found the other fellers had quit, you can believe me he made back to the hotel, to find out a cool place to set down in; but call me what you like, Mac, if a chap didn't come round, jest as fast as his legs would bring him, to offer to take the property off the boy's hands at the price it had ben knocked down. And he hadn't time to call this chap his brother before up came another, wi' two or three more 'most tumblin' after him, an' every one cappin' the offer of the man before him. A boom had struck that bit of property sudden, an' it had ben knocked down before the bis'ness fellers could get around to Central Hall. Course the young chap was ready to scream, but he had the sense to pretend hatin' to part wi' the property, an' he hung on until he got a

wonderful big price, they say. Nobody worried over a few extra hundreds those days. Well, I saw him later on, an' old man Fagge was drinking champagne-water wi' him, an' talkin' to him like a father, an' advisin' him to stuff his valise, an' make east outer the racket, before he flung away that pile he'd jest made by the biggest and almightiest hunk of luck outside creation."

"Did he go?" I broke in.

"I guess so," said Bob Lennie. "Anyhow, I never saw him around no more. Now, I call that real good of ole Joey to advise that young fool to get home, when he'd the brain to get all that pile inter his own pocket. Put that down on the credit side when anyone starts slingin' things 'gainst old man's character, I say."

At the Tecumseh House, where Father Lacombe was also staying, we learnt at dinner that the priest was unwell.

"Got what he calls a chill," announced the proprietor, adding, "He can keep it while he stops here. He won't spend nothing for the good of the house."

After the mid-day meal we went up to the room which we shared between us, closed the door, and sat on our respective shake-downs, there being no chairs, to discuss business. We had brought over from the Yellow Sands store the greater part of our supplies and tools, but there were still necessary articles to be added to our packs, and these were all obtainable at Gull. MacCaskill was paying my expenses as well

as his own, and now that I began to understand the meaning of the thin slips of paper which he smoothed and fingered so deliberately, I felt uncomfortable at being dependent upon his savings, the more so when he said, "We'll want to be careful, Rupe. The bank ain't any too muscular."

I suggested that we should camp out upon the mainland for the remainder of our time; but my partner demurred, because he thought it advisable to watch and wait in Gull.

"You've got brains, boy," the factor went on. "Where do you say Redpath is?"

I thought awhile before replying shortly, "Here."

"That's what I'm sayin' all the time. Olaffson and he are hidin' some place, and I guess they're spyin' upon us. How are they going to cross Lake Peace? They won't have the gall to face us on the *Carillon*."

I suggested that, as they had stolen a canoe from Yellow Sands, they might make away with one of the steam-tugs used at Gull to take out the lumber scows.

"Takin' a tug outer Gull ain't the same trick as stealin' a canoe from a nitchi camp. There's too many folks around, and they might be hanged for stealin' hereabouts."

"I should know that canoe again," I said, and well I might, for I had paddled Akshelah in it many a time. "It's not around here."

"Pshaw! They'd have broke it up, and used it on the camp fire. Professional rascals don't take risks.

Look-a-here! We've got the nickels to stand this racket, but after we've bought our cornmeal, an' bacon, an' dried fruit, an' a few little tools, an' paid our passage across, we won't have a lot to gamble with. The best we can do is to move along easy, watchin' and not worryin', and if Redpath's on the ground when we strike it, there'll be a fight if he's awkward. If we can fix up things so as to work our claims apart, without scrappin', that's our line. If Redpath won't have that, it's throw up hands, and the best partners scoop the pool."

Then the factor produced a pack of cards, and we played poker, and after that went to sleep upon our shake-downs.

It was almost dark when we awoke, and took to smoking to pass the time. Rain was still beating, but the wind had lessened, and a wet mist hung over the lake. It was cold, and I felt miserable; MacCaskill looked depressed, and we were both silent. Thus an hour of unutterable dreariness dragged away.

MacCaskill coughed suddenly, opened the box-stove, spat into it, and flung away the stub of his cigar.

"Swallowed a bit of leaf," he growled. "Sets a man 'gainst smokin' for a while." He laughed grimly, and rubbed his hands. "Cheer up, Rupe; it's Sunday, lad."

"What about it?" I asked, for I had never been brought to look upon one day as different from another, apart from good or foul weather.

"Why, on Sunday evenings I gen'rally get as dolesome as a gibcat. Mem'ries, I guess, but you ain't got enough past to make any of them. When I was away in the bush I kep' track of the days easy. Whenever a fit of the megrims came on 'bout lights down, I'd know 'twas Sunday. It gen'rally worked out right. I come out clean and fresh Monday morning, but Sunday night I get hipped reg'lar. Say! What'll you do, if old man's notion pans out?"

"Follow your lead," I said.

I expected the old fellow to laugh, but the dolesome fit was on him, and he became more surly than ever.

"I went home 'bout eight winters ago," he said morosely.

I saw that he was in the mood to talk, so I settled myself to listen.

"I went home," he repeated. "Away east to St. Catherine's. That's in Ontario, and 'twas a daisy of a place when I was your number. I went home. D'rectly ye shift outer any place ye get forgotten. See? Rainin' yet, I guess?"

"Yes, it's still raining," I said.

"Well, it'll do no harm, maybe. You see, when you come back to an old home ye expect to find a place kep' for ye. Understand?" He gave me no time to reply. "Well now, I left St. Catherine's when I was a younker, and got a post north in the Company. 'Twas a far better thing then than 'tis to-day, and I reckoned I'd stop a few years, make a leetle pile, come

home when I was thirty, and marry Maimie Flett, who was waitin' for me. Pretty little gal, Maimie. Had a way of lookin' at me sideways. She was goin' to wait for me. Wind's comin' up again, I guess?"

"Maybe," I said, though I had not noticed any change.

"You see, those years got slippin' away as though they'd ben oiled for it. I worked steady, an' I saved a bit, but that pile seemed to be awful slow in mountin' up. Life was in front of me, anyhow, and I said, 'No matter, there's a fine time a-comin'.' I wasn't going east, not till I was able to marry Maimie. The years got tumblin' along one over the other so quick, Rupe, and Maimie she writ slower, and then she quit. Must have ben tiresome for the gal, and she hadn't leisure like me, maybe." The factor stopped, bent, and rubbed his leg.

"You went home?" I suggested.

He repeated the words after me slowly.

"Came upon me one day sudden," he went on. "Me muscles had always ben good and worked easy, and I was comfortable in the wind, and right on me food and sleep. One evening, I mind it was wet and cold, I made to pick up a log to carry in to bucksaw. I just gave it a good heave on to me shoulder, and hot snakes jumped right through me, and run all along me back, and I let that log drop. I couldn't have carried that log, Rupe, not if it had ben a bar of gold. You see, I was comin' on fifty, an' that pain was rheumatics. Old man had 'em bad, and you

mind how Antoine used to rub him wi' some of his medicine truck. That night I got smokin', same as usual, in the Fort, and I stopped over it longer, 'cause I'd taken a new pipe from the store, and a new pipe smokes longer than the old 'un, and I got seein' the smoke a-twistin' around, and presently I seemed to see Maimie, and she was lookin' at me sideways, and she was sayin', 'Why! 'tis never you, Andy! They'll be callin' you "old man" when you come down to St. Catherine's.' You see, Rupe, I'd got an old chap sudden, an' I found it out sudden-like."

I had nothing to say to this, because I was young and strong.

"You miss life by waitin' for it, Rupe. You've got to take, an' never wait. I took me leave anyhow, and went east to see the old place again. I was a sort of fool, 'cause I reckoned to find things same as I minded 'em, and Maimie a little bit of a gal, wi' a way of lookin' at me sideways. I came in on the Grand Trunk, and I got out at the depôt, and stood lonesome, and peeked around, jest as awkward as a fly in a glass of beer. You see, I'd known everyone in St. Catherine's my time. I said to a feller, 'What's the name of this place, anyhow?' and he said, 'St. Catherine's, stranger,' and that took the wind outer me. 'Twas an almighty big town, an' I'd left a village; an' the valley was choked wi' buildings, like summer fallow wi' Russian thistle, an' there wasn't any folks to mind Andy MacCaskill. There wasn't a face to gimme a smile, Rupe. Not an ole pard to call out,

'Seems like ole times havin' you around again.' That's what my goin' home was."

"And what about the girl?" I said.

"Never heard tell of her," answered the factor morosely.

His mood changed in a moment, and we sprang together from our shake-downs. Above the beating of the rain and the wind, above the shouts of the drinkers below, came the noise of a nearer scuffle, with the brutal laugh of coarse men, the tread of heavy boots, and a feminine voice, half pleading, half in anger. There were no women in Gull!

The passage was gloomy, because evening was closing, and there was only one window to give light, but I had no need to look twice to see a girl, her head and fine hair half-wrapped in a dripping shawl, and this girl struggling in the hands of a half-drunk crowd of lumbermen, shouting their rough jests and brutal suggestions. A beautiful girl in the camp of Gull!

I knew her before I could see her face, and when I did see her rain-marked features, they were more beautiful than ever. She was my faithful maid, my Akshelah!

She put out an arm, the other was held, and called to me:

"I have followed; I have followed, and it has been hard!"

The factor's story of his life was hot upon my ears, and I heard him saying, "You've got to take, and never wait."

I acted upon this precept. I scattered that rough gang, and sent the men reeling back each way. I rescued Akshelah, swung her lithe figure into our room, where MacCaskill stood bewildered, and stood in the doorway, my arms out, holding at defiance the lumber station of Gull.

AN AFFAIR WITH JAKE PETERSSEN

IT had often been my lot to fight the animals and the elements, but now for the first time I faced my fellow-creatures, every one my superior in experience of the world, and every one apparently my inferior in muscle. As I glanced them over I knew that I was strong enough to break most of them up like so many corn-stalks. I could have shouted as depression left me, and glorious life throbbed along every muscle of each limb. There was not a weak spot in my body. My eye was so true that a man might have indicated a spot twenty feet distant and I could have jumped cleanly upon that mark. I was exhilarated as I stood in the doorway, with the whole camp against me. I was soon to learn how fickle a crowd can be.

Behind me stood Akshelah, so that her breath caressed my neck. I put out my hand and pushed her back. The factor stood against the side wall, peering into the passage, fetching breath suddenly.

"I guess you'll quit, an' give over the gal, stranger," a big-bodied man confronted and advised me.

"She's mine," I said, and I was glad to find my voice steady and clear.

"She's come around here," went on the representa-

tive of public opinion. "An' now she's a-comin' down to the saloon to dance to us."

"I'll see you all darned," I said quietly.

A babel of tongues hummed round my head. A mighty shadow appeared to fall, and for one moment I cooled and weakened. A huge negro pushed aside the big-bodied man, and stood within hand-grip of me. He was a hideous creature, his face scarred, his front teeth gone, one ear frozen off, and when he moved I saw that his mighty body was supple and packed with muscle. He wore a loose cotton shirt and white pants, which exaggerated his great size. This apparition glowed upon me with small malevolent eyes, and said:

"'Pears like, stranger, you forgot hittin' dis chile. Hit him on de nose an' eye. You take what you give, eh?"

I understood that I was being challenged, and replied: "I guess."

"You gimme de gal, an' stop de trubble?" suggested the fearful creature.

I merely replied: "She's mine."

"That's so, boys," bellowed the revived factor. "The gal's his, and she followed down here to find him. Where I come from, a feller's got a right to his own gal."

"He knocked us around," said a voice.

"Hit me on de nose an' eye," repeated the negro. "No man hit dis chile, an' not git it back. I'm ready fo' you." He slapped his arm. "No knives, no

shootin'. Jest strip an' scrap, and de best scrapper take de gal."

"I'm ready," I said.

Old MacCaskill was at my elbow, and Akshelah between us. My partner was cold with excitement.

"The boys 'll be just, Rupe, if you show devil," he whispered. "It's Jake Peterssen you've got to fight, and they say he's never ben bested. Keep quiet, and don't waste yourself. Get at his neck, if you can, and if you can't, get at the side of his jaw. Mind that—mind, the side of the jaw hard."

The saw-mills were stopping, because the gloom of the night hung around Gull. The news flew about like thistle seed in a windy fall. The mob surged and shouted round us, as we passed from Tecumseh House into the cold rain, and down to a long shed used for meetings and dances, on the brink of the high rocks that made an eyebrow to the lake. The wind howled round this exposed spot, and I could hear the beat of the waves, the lash of clouds of spray, and the sullen song of the shifting shingle, while the crowd poured in to take up their stand on tables and barrels, and a score of greasy lanterns were being lighted and hoisted to the roof. The floor was of well-trodden soil, and while we were being made ready a procession of men appeared with sacks of lake sand, which they poured and levelled upon the space reserved for the fight. I was shivering from head to foot, but it was with excitement and muscular strength, not fear. Akshelah was as white as the

sand, and MacCaskill looked eighty when he began to strip me.

"This ain't like knockin' down Redpath," he muttered hoarsely. "Keep his fist outer your neck and jaw, an' mind your stomach. Love o' Heaven, mind your stomach! If he touches your wind you've got to go down."

A couple of coarse-faced men came up, chewing tobacco.

"Out er the way, old man," said one.

They took me in hand, stripped me to the waist; and one of them took off his belt and strapped me, saying, as he pulled it in:

"Shout when it starts to pinch."

When I was stripped I found myself the centre of a great deal of attention. My skin was fair and hairless, my arms so slight, that I could have felt ashamed of my appearance; indeed, at first I thought my examiners were bent upon ridicule, as first one horny hand and then another patted my chest and pinched my forearm or the back of my leg. But it was not so.

One man, with a sharp, pinched face, turned from me, expectorated, and remarked to the negro:

"If he gits a fair holt on yer, Jake, mercy on yer soul! He ain't got one ounce of fat under all his skin."

My opponent's arms were like trunks of trees, and his neck resembled a polished iron cylinder. When I looked at him I thought that if I should get at his

neck I should do nothing but tear the skin off my knuckles.

We were oiled from chin to waist with fresh fish-oil, and then the Master of Ceremonies came out and told me the rules. Anything above the waist was fair fight, either catching or hitting, except kicking and biting, and the use of the nails. The catch might be made with the hand or the arm, but the hit only with the clenched fist. There would be no intervals, and the fight would continue until one of us should be disabled for twenty-five seconds.

The hubbub was indescribable; but once it dropped, when a startling black figure, well wrapped up, pushed in quietly. It was Father Lacombe; and a great shout uprose when it became published that the priest had come with no idea of interference, but to see fair play.

The voices went up again, shouting out bets or making jests, until I took my stand opposite my gigantic opponent, and then they dropped to deep murmurs and whisperings which, when the word had been given, became merely deep and long breathings. The familiar beat of the wind and waves cheered me from outside.

Akshelah stood unmolested beside MacCaskill, and I knew no one would take any notice of her until the fight was done. There was a certain morality in the camp of Gull. If I won, the girl would be resigned to me, and not a man would insult her; if I lost, the

camp at Yellow Sands would mourn for her as one who had passed away from them.

The negro and I stood watching one another, each starting in response to any movement on the other's part. His great body shone in the lamplight, and the oil glistened on his outstretched arms. There was a knife scar where his neck came to the shoulder above the collar-bone, and I determined to hit that if I had the chance. It makes a man wince to feel an old wound struck. I was magnificently cool; my excitement had passed, and my brain was as clear as my own little river of Yellow Sands.

With a surprisingly rapid motion the negro dashed upon me, and I bent, when he made feint with his right arm, and met the crashing blow of his left fist with my forearm.

A cold, numbing sensation raced through me, but I swung my arm sharply, and the pain was gone in an instant; and springing up, I caught the great body and cannoned against it, swinging him round.

He fell on his knee; but this was a trick, for when I pressed on he came up and opened himself by hitting me full in the shoulder, and I staggered back, but steadied myself in time.

Again we stood facing each other as at first, only breathing a little faster.

It was my turn to make the advance, and I did so, making sure of every foothold in the sand. The negro worked round as I came on, and I hovered in front of him, until I became fascinated by a grotesque

face which had been tattooed upon his chest. It seemed to me that I had two adversaries to contend with, the negro and his mascott. After dodging I slipped round sharply, sprang into the air, hitting away his arm, and had him gripped by the waist, his right arm fastened to his side. Silence was broken for the first time as we swung together, I trying to capture his free arm, and he endeavouring to stun me with it. While this arm was upraised I hit him upon the scar as well as I could at close quarters, then dashed my head to one side, striking his flat face with my cheek, and avoiding at the same time the blow which just grazed my shoulder. Hanging on, I dashed my knee into his stomach, but in doing so lost my hold. He got in a blow upon my forehead that knocked me to the sand. I was up, literally at a rebound, and just in time to avoid another blow, which, if successful, would have ended the contest. We stood again as at first, and I heard a far-away voice mutter, "Waste him, yer young fool!"

I was grateful for the hint. Unless I came to receive a knock-down blow, I could last for ever. I had no waste flesh to carry. I was hard and sound, while my adversary was heavy, and comparatively short of wind. He had drunk plenty of corn whisky in his time, while my system was entirely free from alcohol. I could see his great neck palpitating already, and his mouth was open. Obviously I was wasting myself by trying to throw his massive bulk. I determined to make him move, and to wait for the

opportunity of reaching his windpipe. So I came to close quarters and kept at my opponent, worrying him like a dog, and he watched me with his small, half-closed eyes, and hit at me with his superior science while I skirmished, doubtless with the hope that one of these mighty blows might reach the fatal spot and lay me out. But I was too careful of the vital parts, and though the heavy hammering on my shoulders jarred and weakened me, I retained my presence of mind and kept my system, and stayed by him, always feigning an attack, but never wearing myself by striking. His dark hands were stained with my blood, which I could feel trickling over my face. I had to wipe it away from my eyes, knowing what nobody else did, that I was as strong as at the beginning, and the letting of a little blood would do me good after the forced inaction of the past few days.

"Jake's winnin'!" shouted a triumphant voice, though I had lost sight of all spectators. "Drinks to the crowd on Jake."

"Take yer," called another. "Listen at the breathin'. The young 'un ain't in trouble, an', be Heaven, he could throw a locomotive."

I backed, and the negro followed, lurching and lunging at me every step. Round the ring we went three times, until I did not know whether the noise in my ears came from the spectators or from the lake outside. The negro's eyes were two shining slits, and his hideous face wore an expression of

stolid satisfaction, as he kept coming upon me, his fists beating and sounding on my bruised arms. He thought he was winning as he liked; I could not stand before him; he had only to break down my hard arms, and then he could smash his fist into my jaw and end the fight. He grinned exultantly when I began to gasp, but I was fooling him. I could breathe as well that way, and I gasped to let him think that I was distressed. I was as fresh as ever, and went back dancing lightly on my toes, every muscle true and elastic. But my opponent was too seasoned a fighter to grow careless. He kept smiting at me, without giving me a chance to smite back. He was exhausting himself, but he imagined, I believe, that I was at least as much spent as himself.

His opportunity came. I trod on the side of my foot, and was almost off my balance. The negro came upon me like a cyclone, and the yells in my ears resembled a February blizzard. There was no avoiding that black thunderbolt, and it seemed to me on an instant that my head might be wrenched from its trunk. A sick feeling stabbed me; my brain spun round like a wheel; every tooth ached violently, and a horrible hand seemed to clutch at and twist my spine. He had reached my jaw. Another half-inch, and I should have gone down, unconscious, perhaps a cripple for life.

The revelry around took voice, and went up with a shout, "The boy's bested!"

I recovered in time to ward off the following blow

and the negro gripped me, but I drew in my breath and escaped, his hands gliding off my well-oiled flesh, and again I ran back, my adversary following to finish me, and we were both breathing furiously.

Then a clear silver voice rang out and came upon my ears, like the note of the wavy telling its promise of spring.

"*Naspich milwashiu! Sakehanou!*"

It was the cry of the Dance of Friendship.

Again I heard the drone and whirr of the drums, the soft wind sighing in the trees. Again I saw the pale moon over the clearing, and the stars looking down, as we excitedly paced the measure round and round the fires of the lodge, our hands aloft, our hearts throbbing, our eyes flashing as they met, exchanging the vow of eternal fellowship. I snorted like a horse when he smells the coming bush fire. I sprang out, feeling a giant's strength idealised in my body, and closing with the negro, I threw him, while the ground seemed to shake and reel about me. The madness of that strength given by the dance! As he started up I was on him, and beating down his ponderous arms smote him upon the neck, and he fell again with a rattle and a gurgle in his throat. But I could do no more, for when a man comes to his end he must stop.

We were three paces apart, each of us bent, and the negro spat blood into the sand. I could not see Akshelah, but I could guess the look of triumph on her pale, beautiful face, and I could also imagine

MacCaskill biting his moustache, his arms twitching, his eyes wet with excitement.

"Get on!" the voices yelled madly, and instinctively I felt that the majority were addressing themselves to me, because I had won their sympathy. My blood trickling into my mouth revived me. I wiped my hands in the sand, and came forward towards the black, palpitating mass of flesh, while the lumbermen shouted, and sweated, and swore, letting loose their passions in the delirium of watching ours.

The negro gathered himself to meet me, and again his huge arms came out. The oily sweat rolled off his body, and his legs staggered under his bulk. I resumed my former tactics of drawing him on, but he saw my design and baulked me. He refused to act any longer upon the offensive. Unless I would have him recover himself, I should have to attack. I came at him, struck, and stepped back; my arms were longer than his. When he hit back, I jumped round to his side, bent when his arm swung round, and hit him on the remnant of his frozen ear. He growled fiercely, the first exclamation he had made, and snatched at me, but I was away, and came with the persistency of a mosquito to his other side, and so continued, until he was unsteady, and his dry tongue sought moisture from his lips.

Suddenly he gave a great groan, and bore down upon me, his arms working like hammers. Round and round he beat me by sheer weight, like a dog-

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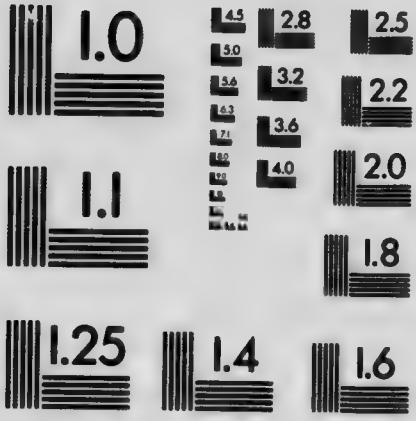

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wolf wearing down a jack-rabbit, and the blows came so fast that I could not distinguish one arm from another.

I defended as best I could, knowing this could not last, and once he had almost done me, because my eyes were blinded with blood. Every breath seemed to be giving him pain, and I was gasping in sheer earnest, and my arms were so heavy that I appeared to be holding great weights in my hands.

We were both men who had never known defeat; but this was my first serious encounter, while my opponent had won many a hard fight. There was little advantage either way. I was stronger in wind and steadier, but I was having my weak moments, and I knew that if my enemy should get in one of his smashing blows the fight would be over, and he would have added another to a long list of victories. I could not hit with the power he was able to command, because I had not the weight to throw behind a blow. If his arms resembled the trunks of hard-wood trees, mine might have been compared to wire ropes. He could smash me, but I could not smash him.

When he staggered towards me again, a new thought took possession of my brain. If I could not smash I might break. So I went on dodging his blows, and watched my chance to seize him; but he guessed my plan, and evaded my hands with all the cleverness of his science.

I was failing. I had it in me to make one more

effort, but I knew it would have to be the last. My opponent could do little beyond holding me out, and I guessed that he, too, was reserving himself for an opening to expend his last gasp of strength. He could not be sure of placing his feet accurately, and more than once I feared he might fall, holding me, and bearing me to the ground by his sheer weight. I could have dropped gladly and gone to sleep, but the thought of Akshelah steadied me. I was fighting for her. Were I to be defeated, I could never appear in Yellow Sands again.

I closed again with Jake Peterssen, though I was sobbing for breath, and a hot pain pricked each side of my body. He met me, and for a few seconds we fought as strongly as though we had come together for the first time. It was the expiring effort of both of us. We had both everything to lose. He braced himself with another groan, and smashed at me straight and strong. I was just able to get back, and then as he came towards me, following his blow with his weight, he overbalanced, and I caught him at last. I caught his arm, and bending, swung him round, though I seemed to be tearing out my heart, and in the midst of the darkness and pain following that awful effort I heard the sharp sound like the cracking of a pistol shot, and the building shook about me again. I had broken his thick right arm!

He was fight to the death. As the darkness lifted I tottered across the sand, while the universe seemed to be roaring in my ears, and he dragged himself up

and staggered upright, and lurched towards me, his left arm half-raised, his eyes shut, his jaw dropping. He could do nothing. He could only stand like an ox before its slayer, and though I was stabbed and racked by every effort to find breath, I was able, by virtue of the strength I now began to realise, to come out and hit him for the last time. Full on his exposed neck came my feeble blow, and he went down again, a great heap of black flesh, and lay nearly doubled, motionless, insensible, while the twenty-five seconds were counted out by yells and oaths.

By a final effort I got the mastery over my legs, and stood upright, swaying to and fro, and groping, until the arms of MacCaskill closed in exhilaration about me, and the sweetness of the knowledge of victory breathed into my body the breath of new life.

Out of the revelry about me it dawned upon my understanding that I had won the freedom of the Camp of Gull.

THE OLD STONE RUIN OF THE BUSH

THE saloon of the Tecumseh House was doing a heavy business that night, after the noisy supper-hour. I was taken in there, almost by force, to drink with the crowd, and presently the loose shape of Father Lacombe loomed large and black, and went by without stopping, but his eyes cast upon me a glance I could not analyse. One of the lumberers addressed him, and a laugh went up.

"Says he don't want to git hit be ye!" called the big man, loosening his belt. "Might spoil his priestin' quite a while."

After the rest and some food I was myself again. Akshelah kept near me quietly, having done sufficient mischief for one day; but when we three were alone I tried to scold her for having followed us, only to give way when she began to cry. MacCaskill was more hard-hearted.

"Allowin' you've had a hard time, you've done a silly trick, anyhow. You've done your worst to have young Rupe spoilt and our plans busted."

"I was lonely," said the girl defiantly. "And I was unh *y*."

"We all get dolesome," said the old philosopher, "but we don't want to kick against it. The trouble

is you got it inter your head to come along to Gull, where you mighter known the boy would be called on to fight for ye—"

"I did not know," began the poor girl, her eyes shining with tears.

"You've got your learning now. I guess you'd best set quiet and chew it. Who came along w .h you?"

"I came by myself," said Akshelah proudly. "I left my canoe where Kinokumisse touches the white sand."

"You did the portage from Waterhen on foot?"

"Yes," said Aks elah, as though it were nothing for a young girl to half-run fifty-seven miles.

"To-morrow you've got to get right back again."

"No," cried Akshelah, "I will not go, unless you come back to the camp with me!"

"Him, you mean. You don't give a darn about me."

Akshelah was honesty itself.

"Yes, I mean him. I came to find him, because we promised to help one another; and if he will not have me I shall go home. But I shall not go to my people. I shall give myself to Muchumeneto at the end of Kinokumisse."

I knew that this threat of drowning herself was no idle one, so I endeavoured to conciliate the wilful maiden.

"You will go back if I tell you." I intended my voice to be stern. "We cannot take you with us."

"I will not. I shall be lonely, and grow old, and you will never come again. I am coming to mend for you, and I will cook your meat, and nurse you if you are sick, and sometimes I shall sing to you; and when you are unhappy I will tell you the story of the little one who conquered the great beast that the Creator was afraid of, and then you will be glad again. I will be like the wind, and you cannot stop the wind from following."

"Gals are all the same," said the factor morosely. "I mind Maimie. Tell her to do a thing she didn't want, and she'd look up and start to cry, and I'd weaken and climb down. You bested Jake Peterssen, Rupe, but you won't best her."

"Come here, little squirrel," was all I said, and Akshelah came like a sunbeam and sat beside me, while the factor grunted and chopped tobacco.

The owner of the house put his head in suddenly.

"Say! there's a feller wants to see you, Petrie. Got a message for you, and he don't want er stop. He's standin' outside."

I got up and whispered with MacCaskill.

"Don't leave the crowd, and you're safe 'gainst all tricks," he said.

I went down at once, came to the doorway, and, awaiting me there in the dim light, I found that wicked, white-faced little man, Olaffson, the Icelander.

Naturally, I began to accuse him, but he stopped me by pushing a note into my hand.

"I've broke with Redpath," he said. "That'll

show ye where he is. He's away from here, an' left me without a cent."

I was in a dilemma. I could only read well enough to make out a few words of print, and this scrawl was something beyond me. I handed it back, declaring that it was too dark to see, and at the same time expressing my disbelief in its genuineness.

"All right," said the Icelander, "I ain't your friend. I told you that before. Now Redpath's quit me. See here!"

It was a plan which he held up in the dim light—a plan of water, rocks, and hills. He lowered it quickly, with a grin upon his white face.

"Going to let me join you?" he suggested. "If you don't move this time, I've got a few pards around Gull, and they'll jump fast enough, and pool their savings."

I kept my wits about me.

"You won't catch me with bluff," I said, for the plan was a different one from that hidden even then in my pocket.

"Mine ain't a bad copy," said the Icelander. "I was mindin' your clothes, you see, when you was scrappin' wi' Jake Peterssen; but I ain't a big man, an' your pard never saw me at work. You won't make an offer, eh? I've treated you fair. Solong!"

He stepped back from the door, while I tried to think coolly over what he had told me.

"Come up and see MacCaskill!" I called in conciliatory fashion; but the little man replied:

"Two to one in a room ain't healthy. I've got what I want. See you later, maybe."

He moved back into the rain and the darkness, and I had never a doubt but that he was taking with him the knowledge of my father's secret. I had only to follow and bring him back, and accuse him of burning down my home. My recently acquired popularity would ensure his conviction; and the little scoundrel deserved hanging.

I ran out, and when Olaffson saw that he was being pursued he took to his heels like a coward, and made for the neck of shingle leading to the mainland. In spite of my recent struggle, I soon began to gain on him. We had drawn away from the shelters, and there was not a soul in sight, while the rain lashed continually.

Coming to a great rock, the Icelander stopped short and dodged round it. I followed, sure of having him; but as I was about to make the turn, a shock came upon me out of the darkness, and before I could recover I was caught from behind, a sack was thrown over my head, and I was borne to the shingle with the bitter knowledge that I had been tricked, that Olaffson had been used as a bait to draw me away from the settlement.

I had to abandon the struggle, for there were certainly three men against me. My arms and legs were strapped; a hand sought for and found the plan, and I heard the splutterings of a match, and knew that the paper was being burnt. After a terrible

interval I heard the tramp of a heavy beast, followed by the deep snorting of a pack-ox. I was dragged up, and seated upon this beast, one ankle was joined to the other underneath its body, and the ox was started, and tramped on, as it seemed, for hours, until I knew we were well away in the forest, because the ground was hard, and there was no more rain. The ox was prodded constantly, but my captors only spoke in deep whispers, which did not reveal their identity. Olaffson I knew, and Redpath I knew; but who was the third?

I was cold, racked, and half-dead when the beast stopped. I was taken down, too helpless to stand, and carried through scrub and long grass. I was dragged up a wall, and let down upon soft, dry ground. Finally my legs were released, the sack round my body unfastened, and I was abandoned, but so utterly exhausted that I fell at once into a dead sleep, indifferent as to what ill-use might be in store for me.

When I awoke, the first thing that startled me was the utter silence which told me of my isolation. I worked my head and shoulders clear of the sack, and got upon my feet with many a twinge of pain and stiffness. My back was one huge bruise, and my bandaged head throbbed fearfully.

Between a few lengths of lumber, placed above a small aperture in the corner, came the sunlight to laugh at me. This hole was quite three feet above my head. The walls were great blocks of solid

masonry, and I wondered at them, because I had never before seen any building which had not been built of wood. I did all I knew to free my wrists, drawing in my breath, dragging, pulling, wearing the straps upon the rough wall; but my pinioners had made no mistake, and I was not the strong man I had been yesterday. Anyhow, a man is a poor creature when his arms are tied behind him.

After a time—how long an interval I do not know, because I think I must have slept again—the silence became broken, the lumber was pulled away, and strong light emptied itself into my prison, making me start and wince, and my eyes run. This new light was again obscured as a big figure let itself through the hole, and descended by means of a rope-ladder, which did not quite reach the ground. My eyes cleared, and I saw under the light the great body and flabby face of the adventurer Redpath.

With one hand clutching the rope, he nodded at me in an altogether friendly fashion, and began at once:

"Good morning, Petrie. Pardon me for intruding upon your privacy; but you may possibly remember that you were not—e. . ver-courteous to me upon the occasion of our la.. meeting." He put out his hand quickly. "I do not wish to recall an unpleasant incident. I have always been a man of forgiving nature, but I will, nevertheless, ask you to place your own small discourtesy against any apparent indiscretion I may now be g. ilty of."

He spoke in the easy, well-trained voice of the educated gentleman. He waited, but when I did not speak, he went on:

"I trust you slept well. You must really have been exhausted after that fight. Allow me to congratulate you upon your well-earned victory. Your exhibition of science and strength was an education. The little affairs at a certain London Club which I once attended were quite fifth-rate performances in comparison."

My tongue was loosened at that, and surprise conquered everything.

"You were watching?"

"And most profoundly interested," said the adventurer, with soft emphasis. "I was so fortunate as to secure an extremely favourable position from which to view the spectacle. Your blows were perfect models for any—er—prize-fighter to imitate. Concerning their power and their accuracy, this unfortunate mark upon my own forehead furnishes ample testimony. You do not see it? Ah, the light down here is somewhat bewildering. By the way, you must have been wondering how these stone buildings ever came to be here. Perhaps you are interested in archæology? These stone remains take us, I assume, very far back into the past, and I fancy you and I are the first men of culture to light upon them. I should say, from a distinctly elementary knowledge of paleontology, that they were originally erected by fire-worshippers; but as your local

knowledge is possibly extensive, I am quite prepared to defer to your opinion."

He pulled out a cigar, standing before me, and went on smoothly:

"You reserve your judgment? Well, I believe you are wise. These ruins happen to be here, and they serve the sufficiently useful purpose of affording you with shelter, and there can be no conceivable advantage to either of us from determining what people or age saw them spring up. I hope the rain did not come through last night. The roof seems solid enough. Will you smoke? Ah, excuse me! I had not noticed that your arms are temporarily unavailable."

His manner stunned me. I wanted to shout at him, to curse him, and threaten him, but I was frozen and unmanned by his cynicism, and all I did say was merely, "What do you want with me?"

He seemed surprised.

"I am, like you, my dear Petrie, most desperately dull, and it occurred to me that it would be pleasant to drop in for a chat. There are absolutely no gentlemen in this God-forsaken country. Besides, your father and I were very intimate friends, before he went wrong. I remember your birth well; indeed it was only a slight difference with your father which prevented me from becoming your godparent. You were a fine child, yes, a distinctly fine child, but I remember you would never let me nurse you. In fact, you always showed a remarkable aversion for me."

His flabby face shook with laughter as he fumbled for a match.

That woke me up, and I said deliberately:

"I guess you've got me, Mr. Redpath. You took me foul last night, and you brought me here for your own ends. What's going to happen to me now, only you and Olaffson know; but unless you covered your tracks well through the forest you've done a bad piece of work—"

"My dear fellow," interrupted the adventurer, "really you must not suggest such things. It is not my fault if I happen to be entirely dominated by that vile little brute Olaffson. It is a disgusting confession for an Englishman to make, but it is none the less a fact. That Icelander does what he likes with me. He twists me round and round his little finger. He insisted on bringing you here, and for my life I dared not cross him. Of course, you find it tedious here," he went on, relapsing into his former mood; "and it must be decidedly annoying having your arms tied—tightly, if I mistake not? Should you be leaving this place I must, as a friend, warn you against Olaffson. He is a dangerous man, and what is worse, an utterly unscrupulous man."

"Are you two going to starve me?" I said.

"My dear Petrie, you are indeed in a morbid mood!" was the answer I received.

In my sheer impotence I could have thrown myself against the stone wall. My anger ran away with my prudence at last, and I swore at the man, and cursed

him, daring him to approach me, pinioned though I was. He looked really disturbed, and when I had done, for lack of strength, continued softly:

"Too bad, Petrie! That excitement yesterday was too much for you. I fear you suffer from fighting on the brain. But why speak of fighting with me? My dear man, if you and I met in a little friendly bout I am sure I should be unrecognisable to my friends in less than two minutes. But since you have introduced the subject, what is your opinion of this compact little protector?" He pulled a little plated revolver from his hip pocket, and extended it towards me smilingly. "I bought it in Winnipeg as I came through. It is said to be the best, as well as the latest, thing in quick-firing. I carry it loaded, of course, though I understand I am breaking the law of the country by doing so; but I am sure you would be the last to condemn my action, because you know what rascals there are about this land—it contains the scum of the earth, Petrie, I do assure you. Then, you see, I am elderly and weak, and almost as nervous as any old woman."

He finished this speech with a deprecatory smile, and returned the weapon to its accustomed place in a dexterous fashion, as though well accustomed to the use of it.

"I guess you're going?" I said, keeping down my madness by a great effort.

"Well, I suppose so. These partings are included among the petty troubles of living. Ah, Petrie, if I

were you! Lucky man! young and strong, with all your life ahead. Look at me, old and poor, though, by Gad! it seems only a year ago that I was sent down from Oxford for defying the dons, as they termed it, in their injustice. Well, good-bye, my boy. Take care always to steer clear of Olaffson. By the way, I'm thinking of crossing the lake to hunt for gold."

He stood in the light, looking down at me slowly.

I could not answer him—I could not! I had no learning and no wit to make reply to this calm, cynical gentleman, who had come merely to enjoy the sight of my degradation. He stepped upon the rope ladder, pushed himself out, the smoke of his cigar lingering; but before replacing the lumber, his loose face appeared again, and he said:

"If I don't call again, Petrie, and I fully intend to give myself that pleasure, you will understand that I have been prevented by pressing business. This is such an out-of-the-way place, and of course, it is very difficult to get at. Good-bye, and good luck!" Once more he looked back to shout "The weather's grand!"

Darkness came after the sunshine, and the night followed, but Redpath did not come back. The hours went by, taking with them another day, and silence and loneliness were my meat and drink. When the night came again I understood more clearly as vitality ebbed out of me. I was abandoned to starvation in this old stone ruin of the bush.

CLERICAL ERRORS

I HAD shouted for hours, as it seemed to me, in the frail hope of guiding some wandering Indian to my prison, until my throat went dry, and my swollen tongue filled my mouth. The loneliness remained unbroken. My wild voice broke against the stone roof, to fall back upon me in fragments of wasted echoes. All this effort was unprofitable; I was doomed. I was a missing man; my little course was to run out in that mysterious ruin, and my bones were to be added to its antiquities.

That which tormented me more than the desire for vengeance, more even than the fear of death, was my utter helplessness—liberty was so near to me. In my normal state I could so easily have jumped to catch the square hole, and so dragged myself out to the roof; but I was pinioned, and my arms, with all their muscle that I had learnt to be proud of, were the first part of me to die.

I sank slowly into a sleep which was not sleep, until a time came when the pale moon lit and stabbed one shivering ray into my prison. I writhed along the ground like some poor beast which has been shot in the hinder part, and bathed my fevered face in that light. Anything for the world again!

My eyes were sore, my half-bandaged wounds stabbed me, red spots spun confusedly wherever I looked. I was afraid of the great loneliness, which suggested the more fearful silence I was about to enter. As I sank towards oblivion I prayed for the sound of a voice, even the growl of a beast or a bird-call, even a sad voice from the grave.

I shook off the stupor, and called aloud once more. It was not a shout for help, but a shout of fear. The horror of the great shadow was over me.

The echoes had hardly settled down into the dust before my nerves, strung to a terrible tension, thrilled and started with the shock of a voice, and my ears caught the answering sound of a feeble cry out of the night.

"Rupe! Boy Rupe!"

"MacCaskill," I muttered in a delirium.

Animal-like scrapings came against the outer wall; a beating upon the stones, a great groan, and then a mad burst of laughter. Soon an unearthly voice began to sing the song of joy, called the National Anthem of the English. The wild sounds made the night tumultuous:

"Kitche milweletuk Kinwaish
Pimetesit. O Pimache!"

How had this native singer found me? How did he know my name?

It was a bright night, and the wind was in the south. On such a night the spirits of the dead are

abroad, singing their songs of gladness. I was about to die. I was able to hear, as I came near to join them.

"God save the Queen!" wailed the voice, but now in English. Whether this Queen were a living personage or a tutelary spirit, I did not know. A scream made the air start, and then the sounds made words—"Me son Rupe! Me son!"

Now it dawned upon my failing brain that my father had come back, and because I was not yet dead, I feared to meet him. Cry after cry pierced the moonlight, with some weird laughter, and the sounds of an old man's trouble. The tumult seemed to me so great that I turned and weakly muttered, "There must be a multitude, and they are all dead." I tried to turn my voice upward in the call, "Father!"

The wandering voice spoke and answered clearly:

"Comin', Rupe. Have patience wi' me, boy. I've ben a-lookin' ev'ry night. Ay, ay, ev'ry night a-lookin', an' a-watchin', an' a-callin'. Ole father's found ye."

I could make nothing of this. My father had only been dead a short time. There was a scuffling upon the roof, and the old spirit went on yelling the National Hymn, and danced to his own mad music. I then heard the angry scratching of his nails upon the roof of my prison.

"They hid the boy away here!" screamed the voice, shrill and cunning. "I tried to stop 'em, but they

wouldn't have it. They said, 'Git, ole man!' He was jest tired wi' fightin', was the boy. I could tell he'd wake after a while. Rupe!"

I shouted back, alive and conscious at last.

A great stone crashed down, and the lumber bounded and splintered. Piece by piece the prison bars disappeared, and the cool moonlight dropped upon me. In vain I tried to move. I could not see my rescuer, but I realised that he was happily seated at what he thought was the entrance to my grave. His voice was hoarser, when he bent down to call, "Rupe! They're a-comin' up all round!"

He went on:

"Bide low, while they clear away a bit. They're screechin' awful along the creek, an' the blue lights are jumpin' crazy. I knew the dead were around to-night. Bones were rattlin' dreadful when I come out. There was crowds of stiff 'uns a-whisperin', an' a-laughin', an' a-tumblin' around in the air, as crazy as sand-bugs. I looked for ye among 'em. An' I come out a-calling after ye. Bide a while, boy; I'm restin' a piece, afore pullin' the earth off ye."

Slowly it came to my tired brain that I was being saved by a madman who had lost a son bearing my name.

The cunning voice above went on:

"I told 'em I'd find ye, an' 'twas no use talkin'. I said, 'Boys all! Rupe 'll come back one midnight. Ole moon 'll be good and full a-comin' over yon ledges, an' ole south wind 'll blow soft, an' the tree

heads 'll start to jump. I'll come along the Creek o' Corpses a-callin' Rupe, an' I'll find me boy. Sure, I'll find him, an' we'll go home together to the ole home on the lake.'"

The voice had been pathetic, but it altered sharply and became angry.

"She's ben a-followin' me ev'ry night, Rupe. She seemed lost to-night, an' she looked only a girl. She was a-comin' this way—a-comin' after me, Rupe, a-comin' to keep you down in the ground. You mind the squaw, who fit worse'n a man, Rupe. You mind she wounded ye in the leg. You didn't see it out. Listen, boy! Listen to ole father!"

His voice became a scream.

"I'll tell ye, Rupe. There was a man who fit wi' a bush-axe, an' doin' good, I tell ye, a-knockin' 'em around fine, an' the squaw made at him. Eh! like a beast, boy, like a wil' beast. She'd fixed her few, but this 'un was too slick. He jumped 'way back, an' when she come on with her big cutter he dropped his axe, an' she dropped—ay, dropped, an' doubled, an' kicked once, an' never used her knife again. I was that man, Rupe."

His shrill laughter rang out triumphantly.

"I set down, Rupe, 'cause we was beatin' 'em fast, an' I was winded, being oldish. I got lookin' around, an' come to see a stiff 'un a-lyin' close up. He was only a boy, you might say. Wounded ter'ble he was, an' lettin' the blood run outer him like smoke outer a stove-pipe. You was that man, Rupe."

He cut short his mad laughter, and I heard him move.

Two crooked hands came weirdly through the aperture, and the voice shouted at me.

For a moment I forgot the madman in the horror of the thought that Redpath might be near. My feeble heart seemed to be stopping, and a succession of dreadful screams beat into my ears and realised my dread.

"She's found us, Rupe! The squaw's a-comin'!"

I was so fearfully weak that I even laughed at his grotesque fear. Probably the woman he feared so greatly was some crooked shadow cast by the moon.

Then another voice came out of the night to tell me that the madman's eyes were true—a soft voice, not of the dead, nor of the insane, but of the loving and living.

"I am hungry, and very tired. I have searched for three days, and this is the third night. I heard your voice in the bush, and so I have come."

The world was mine again!

The old man sobbed, and panted, and screamed, and would not allow the girl to come near. I could hear him running and howling, as she tried to out-manœuvre him; but I was beyond aiding myself. I could not have stood or walked had the walls fallen away from me.

"Let me go to him!" pleaded Akshelah; but the maniac, with his superstitious fears, would not hear of it. "Then I must fight you," said my maid.

As I had lately fought Jake Peterssen for her good fame, so now Akshelah fought the madman for my life.

How long they actually contended I do not know, because Akshelah would never tell me, but presently a light footstep ran overhead, a lithe figure dropped through the hole, and Akshelah knelt beside me. She did not speak, she had not the breath; but she freed my dead arms, and, supporting my head upon her shoulder, gave me water of life out of a little bottle. It seemed nothing but a taste, but more might have done me harm.

She took from her bosom a little meat and bread, which she had brought from Gull, and though starving herself, had never touched, and fed me sparingly. She wiped my face, and chafed my arms with her soothing little hands, and while she worked to restore me I felt something dripping upon my face from hers. The maniac's long nails had scored deep marks upon her cheeks and forehead.

When I awoke from the long sleep into which she had soothed me it was day. I felt weak and miserably ill, but this illness was due to life returning, and not lessening; from finger-tips to shoulders my arms were two separate tortures. Close beside me Akshelah lay curled up in the sleep of exhaustion, her poor little brown face dreadfully stained and pinched, and my heart cut me. Had this girl been wise she would have remained in the shaded encampment among her own people, instead of following my

fortunes, to risk dangers by land and water, privations, insults, death itself; and for what? Because she fancied I wanted her? Because she had promised to be always my friend? Because she was happier with me in danger than in comfort when I was away? Despite all my ignorance, I thought that this last might prove to be the true reason.

Directly she woke, worn and wan, the girl began to laugh, and mirthfully assured me that life was very enjoyable, even when one was next door to starvation. My maid went on laughing when I expressed a fear that Redpath might return, and she went on to tell me of the notices posted about Gull Island, offering a reward for information concerning me, and of MacCaskill, whom she had left running wild, but "no good."

Then she swung herself from the prison, and I passed an anxious hour, which I employed in trying to use my limbs. I had quite forgotten the half-breed madman until Akshelah came back.

"He is asleep in the grass, and bitten all over with flies," she said. "He is just where I sent him. I hit him like you hit the black man."

Soon I heard scrapings and whinings, and the feeble voice demanding where I might be found.

"We are close to the great water," said Akshelah. "Look at the berries I have brought you."

We ate the rich red berries, and drank the sweet water, while the madman muttered and crawled overhead. When we had done, I declared that I could

move. Akshelah divided her red shawl in the middle, and having secured the ends, tied one part about me under my arms. Climbing out, she instructed the guardian of the "grave" to lay hold and pull. Now that it was daylight, he had lost his great fear of her, and obeyed, pulling wildly, until I was brought back to liberty.

The stone building stood upon a clear circular space, some four hundred yards in diameter, the circumference being the dense lumber forest. Round my late prison a broken circle of huge monoliths occupied the turf, some erect, some leaning, others recumbent; in later years I saw in a book an illustration representing a similar circle of such stones, which this book informed me were to be found at a place called Stonehenge, somewhere in England. On the south side I could see the beginning of the dip, which the old man called the Creek of Corpses. Formerly, I presume, a fight had taken place in the neighbourhood between the natives and the Hudson Bay Company, and the dead had been buried along this creek. Redpath had discovered this spot, which formed the centre of a veritable natural labyrinth, as he had a faculty for finding out most things, and had conjectured that it would make a safe and suitable place to entomb me in return for the blow I had given him.

It became a problem how to rid myself of the ragged, hairy old creature who clung to my arm, babbling unceasingly. At length I decided to go

with him, because he had a log hut near the beach, and I was too weak to walk any distance. We made our way by easy stages through the forest, until a strong sheet of light flashed before us, and I felt that I was indeed alive. I shared all the native love, and in part their superstition, for the water; and here it was—bright and beautiful Lake Peace! My exclamation found its echo from the mad hermit who claimed me for his son:

"You m'nd it, Rupe? Course you mind it! Round the point, jest roun' yon tamarac bluff, there's the ole shanty same as ever. You mind our fishin' nights, when the moon was good, an' how we pulled out the white-fish? Mind ole Bill Alloway, wi' his face like a cat-fish? Mind one time, when we was fishin', an' Bill Alloway pulls off his shirt an' pants, an' swims an' dives around? Sudden, yer line gits a holt on something big, an' you pulls an ole cat-fish half outer the water in the moonlight. 'Father,' ye lets out, 'father! Darned if I haven't caught ole Bill Alloway!'"

The old man tumbled upon the grass, laughing, and picked the white moss.

His shanty stood on the edge of the cliff, where the tamaracs overhung the rocks, and a wonderful white beach, a hundred yards in width, and fantastically marked with the pattern of webbed feet, ran down to the lake. The hut was so dirty that we made a camp outside. I quickly caught some white-fish, thus proving my skill as a fisherman, despite my

failure on the evening when I first met Akshelah. When night had fallen, the girl left me to find her way to Gull. The old man's madness came on again with the moon, and he implored me to escape with him, so that I had little sleep; but I could not be hard upon the poor creature, because, had it not been for him, Akshelah would probably never have found me, or have only done so when Redpath would have been satisfied with my state.

In the morning, when the lake was a cold grey, and the white mist hung in ghost-wreaths, Akshelah returned, and brought MacCaskill, weary and short of breath, with her.

Between the saw-mills and the shingle beach which brought out to Gull Island was a long building of rough lumber, roofed with shingles. Over the entrance appeared a long board, bearing in large, irregular capitals the information, "Tommy's Restaurant-Hotel." Underneath hung a square board, upon which was inscribed the tariff of the house, which read, according to MacCaskill, exactly as follows:—

Square Meal	25c.
One-Day-Filler	50c.
Gorge	75c.
Straight Drink	20c.
Mixed Drink	25c.
Bed	1dol.

No Bugs, unless you bring 'em.

We reached this rough but isolated hostelry about midnight, the four of us, because the madman fol-

lowed me persistently, and we went inside to rest. MacCaskill explored the silent house, and when he returned, his face looked as though he had received a fright.

"Come wi' me," he whispered. "Take hold of me arm, and walk careful. Don't let 'em see you."

Along the passage were several compartments reserved for gambling, and we could look into any of these without well being seen, because the passage was unlighted, and the tobacco smoke inside hung in clouds. In the compartment indicated by the factor I saw a poker four deep in their game, and I was able to name each man.

The gamblers were—Jim Morrison, the sailor who had accosted me from the car my first morning in Gull; Gedeon Leblanc, the half-breed; Olaffson, the unmitigated scoundrel; and the man who had called himself Father Lacombe, the well-known missionary of Three Points.

III

ON A FRESHWATER SEA

MORNING

AT last the rumbling motion overhead had ceased. The hum of the screw and the beat of the engine, with the back-wash of the water as the keel slipped through, told me that the *Carillon* had cast off from Gull Harbour, and was away on her north-eastern trip for the Little Peace River.

I rose from my recumbent position behind the fish barrels in the hold, but I went down again, and as promptly as though a pistol had been levelled at my forehead. A couple of sailors stood together in the half-light, and I had recognised them at once as the half-breed Leblanc and the ill-favoured Morrison, who had presumably slipped away together from deck, so soon as their labours were over, that they might discuss certain plans of their own out of earshot.

"Gimme a bite of eatin' tobaccer," growled Morrison at the outset, and set me reflecting that the man was always asking for something. I heard the shuffling of cowhide shoes, followed by sundry unhealthy sounds of expectoration, then the same voice said, "There's a-goin' to be scrappin'?"

"You min' yer talk. See, Bill? If you'd ben made wi' no tongue you'd be better fixed right now."

I reflected that Leblanc was master here.

"When I talk, I watch who listens. Gimme a drop o' liquor."

"Ain't got none."

The men shuffled closer to my hiding-place.

"Do we scrap, or don't us?" demanded Jim Morrison.

"We don't have to," said Leblanc. "It's skin eyes and shut mouth. When they done the findin', than up we come. See?"

"Say, but what about this Redpath? Teaser, ain't he?"

"Do what he tells ye, Jim," said the half-breed, and I could tell by his voice that he was ill at ease. "Redpath don't have no [illegible]keyin'. If we ain't clean to him, he'll start to work an' snuff us out, same as he's done to Rupe Petrie. If he says 'Lick me boots,' we goter lick. See?"

"Will I talk to Olaffson?" suggested Jim Morrison. "Maybe he'd come useful."

Leblanc grunted.

"He'll chalk his own track. There's only one man, 'sides Redpath, what could spile us, an' he's ben spilt hisself. He could have bruke the lot of us, same as he bruke Jake Peterssen."

"Ole Mac, he ain't no sort er good?" muttered Morrison.

"No sort, now his pard's gone."

"Gimme a match."

A high-pitched voice came sounding into the hold, and I recognised the cry of Sandy, the mate.

The men separated at once, climbing out of the hold at opposite ends; while I jumped over the barrels, and stretched myself in the open, feeling strong and fit again.

MacCaskill and I had foreseen that the ship would be full of plotting, but I had now learnt that the cross-plots were likely to prove of a more serious nature than we had anticipated.

Leblanc knew something of old Fagge's secret, and he had taken Morrison into his confidence; while assuming to be in abject submission to Redpath, they were planning how to best him. I was sorry for them.

In determining the position, I made it out to be that Leblanc and Morrison were against everyone; MacCaskill and myself against Redpath and the Icelander, with, incidentally, the two thick-skulled sailors; Redpath always for himself; Olaffson nominally for the adventurer, actually for himself. MacCaskill and myself formed the only genuine alliance, with Aksheiah to aid us, and I felt we were good enough to carry the position.

After recognising Redpath under the disguise of Father Lacombe, the factor made the plan to keep me hidden. He had brought me on board the *Carillon*, and stowed me away below the night before sailing; while he had come aboard in the

ordinary way with Akshelah, who, of course, could not be induced to return to Yellow Sands.

It was while waiting for the vessel to get well out to sea from Gull that I had overheard the conversation between the two sailors.

Swinging myself up out of the hold, I made along the lower deck, enjoying the prospect of the consternation my presence must cause.

Suddenly a very different voice came to me.

One more step over the greasy boards, and I caught a side glance of the entrance to the engine-room, and my heart went a little faster, because I had seen the abrupt flicker of a black skirt.

Scarcely five yards away, blocking the entry, stood my hereditary enemy, his back towards me, still preserving the disguise of the black-bearded priest.

Without a sound, I seated myself upon one of the numerous barrels, full in the open, the gloom of the ship falling behind me. I knew that Redpath must turn and see me sitting there, silent and motionless, with my eyes fixed upon him. I thought it possible that the sight might scare him pretty badly.

Thus situated, I could hear the adventurer speak, and at the same time I imagined that the engineer could not be very happy at being examined by this particular passenger.

It was impossible to hear Pete's replies, but Redpath's questions were sufficiently audible.

"You must often find the heat down here intoler-

able?" he suggested, in his kindly tones. "Ah, yes, it would reduce a fat man considerably. While the weather remains as at present you must find your duty a pleasure. What? No, I did not observe the sound. My ears are not trained like yours."

He stepped back until he was quite outside the engine-room, and I made certain that he would turn and discover me. But after listening, he returned to his former position, and went on:

"I suppose we must expect a fresher wind, now that we are approaching the open sea. Ah, I heard it then. What effect does the moving of that lever have?"

He waited for the reply, which was inaudible to me, and continued with increased interest:

"For reducing the pressure. I see. If you desired to lower the speed so as to stop the vessel? Yes. And for starting? Ah, I quite understand. What? Shift the lever gently and gradually, as she gains way. Ah, yes, it is all very interesting, and equally instructive. To a man of my calling, a very full, general knowledge becomes indispensable. It will be obvious to you that at some future date a contingency might possibly befal, which would make it imperative upon me to understand how to control such a vessel as this. The knowledge you are now giving me in an idle moment ...'ght well lead to the saving of many precious human lives. Thank you, my son!"

How could the man do it?

A great wave flung itself against the side; and when it had beaten back, Redpath was saying:

"Quite so. I can easily believe that in the hour of danger the engineer's position becomes especially full of peril. Now, if this fair weather continues, when may I expect to be landed at the mouth of the Little Peace?"

I suppose the engineer referred to the chance of delay, because the adventurer said presently:

"You need not remind me. I know this dangerous lake, with its mysterious storms, which, as you say, spring up suddenly under a clear sky, and vanish with the speed of their coming. I have heard so many sad tales from my own flock, so many poor Indian fishermen lost, so many lumber scows wrecked. It is very pitiful!"

The rascal coughed sanctimoniously. His back was still towards me; I wondered that he had not felt my presence so very near to him.

A big shaft of light fell through the hatchway ahead, and suddenly a couple of burly legs appeared on the ladder in that light. Then Factor MacCaskill trod heavily down, and saw me when he had made a few paces; and he saw also the mock priest between us, and was quick-witted enough to grasp the situation, and clever enough to use it to the full. He checked himself abruptly when a couple of short paces divided him from Redpath, and his glance went heedlessly past the masquerader, to settle upon me with a well-simulated expression of fear and amazement.

"Golden gates of Jerusalem!" called the old

fellow, making his voice thick and unsteady, and allowing his pipe to drop upon the deck.

The adventurer swung round between us, and in one moment his face became like the underpart of a fish. The flesh seemed to shrink up under its covering of false hair, and his eyes were like two little pits of oil. He had confessed that his body was weak—he had almost boasted of it—but his will was like steel. For the moment only it bent, and the next was strong again. His eyes left me and settled upon MacCaskill, and the factor looked him back like an honest man, without yielding an inch or ceding a wink. I left my barrel, and stepped forward with all the indifference I could muster.

"Where in the name of everything upon earth have ye sprung from, Rupe?" exclaimed MacCaskill.

"I only stowed myself among the cargo," I said, for the benefit of listeners. Then I turned towards Redpath and Pete, who put his startled face out of the hot oil-smelling recess, "How are you, father?" I said, with all the confidence of having the stronger hand.

The adventurer stuck to the rules of his game.

"My dear young man!" he exclaimed, with splendid affection, emphasising each syllable with ease and unction. "This is, indeed, a joyful surprise. Why, we have all been in mourning for you!"

AFTERNOON

LENNIE'S mask-like face became animated when I was introduced at dinner-time into the deck-cabin where meals were served. Questions began to buzz about my ears like mosquitoes on a damp evening. I told the story of my kidnapping, although I professed to be ignorant of my captors' names, and when I had said all I intended to, the captain began to talk.

"Jake Peterssen never done it," he stated. "You beat Jake, an' he took his beatin'. There wasn't one madder than him when 'twas told you'd ben misplaced. No, sir, Jake was fair spoilin' to fix the man what took you foul. He said right through you'd ben took foul. Ain't that so, Pete?"

Pete acquiesced, and Lennie disregarded his dinner and talked on.

"Well, now, there's ben strange doings at Gull this trip." He lowered his voice, peered about, and whispered, "Where's the father?"

"Outside," said the steward. "Said he wasn't wantin' his grub till some of ye was through."

Lennie became mysterious.

"Some of ye must have heard tell of Father Lacombe of Three Points. They say he's a priest what always wants to stretch the days out at work, and don't have no use for settin' around. They do say he's agoin' to be next archbishop, 'cause he went to a place called Rome two year ago, a-payin' calls on ole Father Holiness. Well, now, we don't give a darn whether he's goin' to be archbishop or church-scraper; but here's the trouble: What's the father's racket a-bummin' around Gull these days on the idle, watchin' the boys at scrap, and going inter Tommy's Restaurant wi' a bad crowd? Tommy wouldn't get to give him away, 'cause that sort of thing ain't bis'ness; but some of the boys saw him go in along wi' toughs. Well, there's that, an' there's the boy bein' took foul, an' there's that steamer."

It became my turn to ask a question.

"We'd got away from Gull this mornin', when Sandy sights a steamer runnin' at the island from the south," went on Lennie sadly. "She was comin' full rip, an' not flyin' any flag far as we could see. Sandy made out she was the *Firefly* of the Force, but I'll take me oath she was the *Sault Ste. Marie* of the Hudson Bay. Don't matter which she was. What does she want around Gull, anyhow? This is the only boat that goes to Gull, 'cept the lumber scows."

Lennie looked round the table sourly, and went on:

"We're goin' to have a bad trip. That's a dead sure thing. When I set down to breakfast before

startin' I found a flap-bug in me porridge. Takes a black dog wi' a wall-eye to beat that for luck."

After dinner MacCaskill and I talked upon deck, while Akshelah sat herself in the sun, her deft fingers engaged in repairing certain ravages in my coat. The factor thought that the opposition threatened by Leblanc and Morrison would be more likely to benefit than to injure us. "Sort of divides the aces," was his comment. He went on to impress upon me the necessity for deceiving Redpath by making him believe that he was deceiving us, and here I had a question to ask, because I wanted to learn how the adventurer had come by his disguise.

"It's as clear as sky, Rupe, that he brought the fixings along to Yellow Sands," the factor said. "He's ben playin' some lively game down east, or down south, and havin' to get out at a small hole he fixed himself up as a priest and came north for his health. Likely he didn't change that rig until he got to Yellow Sands River, and heard tell of ole Petrie. By that time he reckoned he'd show up as his own ugly self."

I was for telling Lennie the truth, but MacCaskill, who knew the world, pointed out danger. Redpath would never allow himself to be taken without bloodshed. Even if placed under confinement, he would possibly win over the crew by promising to share his secret with them. By this time I began to understand what men will do for "the dirt." A mutiny might follow, and we should certainly be worsted.

"We'll have a chance to get ahead of him," went on the factor. "The *Carillon* drops us at the Little Peace, and from there we work our way north along the coast."

He called to Akshelah.

"Know what sort of folk live at the mouth of the river, my gal?"

Akshelah looked up, her eyes full of thought, and said presently:

"If the people of Mekawask are there, they are our friends."

"They will let us have a big canoe?"

"I will get you a canoe," said the girl proudly.

"And Redpath will steal one," added the factor morosely.

"I will tell the tribe," went on the girl. "They will watch their canoes, and if the man comes to steal, they will shoot at him."

MacCaskill chuckled, "I guess we've got his reverence."

Hardly had he spoken when the man himself came out of the cabin, and began to pace the deck on the opposite side to us. His cassock was held up behind by a safety pin, and he wore the hard felt hat in which he had landed at Gull. He carried his disguise well.

That he was promenading with a motive beyond mere exercise was soon made evident; he gave a side movement with his head. I could not be sure

that he was signalling me, but when I made no response, he boldly beckoned me with his hand.

"See what his game is, but don't let him fool you, or take you from deck," said MacCaskill.

"If you go to him I shall come with you," said Akshelah, flinging down my coat, her eyes lighting. "He will overcome you with his eye, and throw you into the water."

"Stop where you are," I ordered, quite sharply, but apparently young women delight in disobedience.

Akshelah immediately rose up and accompanied me.

I felt a sense of shrinking as I came up to the big, strong-willed man. His keen eyes passed over me, before he spoke in his courteous manner.

"Can we not dispense with the—er—young lady, Petrie?"

He was not going to play the priest with me, because he understood that I had seen through his disguise.

Akshelah faced him at once.

"I am going to stay here," she said angrily.

The adventurer nodded and smiled at me.

"A positive young Xantippe, my dear fellow. Do you speak French?"

I did not know what he meant, but rightly replied in the negative, and motioned Akshelah to stand a little aside. She took her stand to the right of me, watching Redpath unflinchingly. Farther along I could see the factor's straw bonnet bobbing up and down excitedly.

"Have you anything to say to me?" I said, feeling how much rather I would openly fight with this man, because when it came to a contest of tongues I had no chance.

"In the first place, I have to congratulate you upon your escape from Olaffson and his gang of rascals," said Redpath heartily. "I did what I could for you. Little, I confess, but I was powerless to do more. By the way, did this disguise deceive you at all?"

"Yes, at first."

I tried not to be staggered at his coolness.

"I never intended to deceive you. I was compelled to assume these—er—priestly habiliments in order that I might be able to conceal my identity from our mutual enemies. The plan succeeded well enough with these unobservant creatures, though I never flattered myself that I had misled an intellectual and social equal." He was playing with his false beard while he spoke. "I had more than one narrow escape myself, which I will tell you of later—these wretched men are so suspicious." He came a little closer, his glance falling upon MacCaskill in the distance. "You think your servant is to be trusted?"

I knew that he was playing with me, yet I could not retaliate upon this calm, cynical gentleman. He managed to exert a marvellous power over me. I answered him as meekly as possible.

"He is my friend, and I know I can trust him."

Redpath looked surprised, and a little concerned.

"My dear fellow," he said, in a deeper voice, "are you quite prudent? Pardon me. I do not question the sincerity of your motives, but do you think you are wise? The man is palpably not of our station in life. He looks simple and good-hearted, but it really never pays to take a man of so humble an origin into full confidence. I feel sure you have acted for the best, but, as your partner in this enterprise, I feel called upon to offer a word of advice, if not warning. You must remember I am older than you, and I have been deceived so often." He sighed, and shook his head mournfully. "It is pitiful to think how often I have been deceived. Even your own father, Petrie—better man never breathed, and yet he wronged me bitterly, dear fellow! How often I have sighed the reproachful utterance of the old poet, 'It was even thou, my companion!'"

He turned from me, and fixed his false eyes upon the flickering lights and colours of the water.

All that I could say was:

"Are you going to keep up your disguise all the trip?"

"I have no choice," came the answer. "Only you and your—I should say our—servant, with this young lady, will know that I am not Father Lacombe, of the upland mission. My dear fellow, I am exercising all my ingenuity to conceal my identity from Olaffson and Leblanc, the latter a loose-tongued scoundrel who knows far more than he ought, and who goes about the ship dropping hints among his miserable

associates. Any one of them would murder either of us cheerfully if they were to gain by doing so."

I pulled myself together.

"You were with them in Tommy's Restaurant. You were playing poker with them."

If I had thought to abash him, I had made a mistake.

"Yes," he said, with his quiet, kindly smile. "It was all I could do for you, my boy. I kept the three scoundrels engaged, hoping you might escape in the meantime, and as events transpired, you succeeded in doing so. I understand that some of the priests do mix with the men upon their stations, and play cards with them, in order that they may get into closer touch. I chose that place because it happened to be well away from Gull, and I was the less likely to be noticed. It was somewhat of a strain to sustain my character before men who know me as myself, but ou managed to escape, I am amply rewarded fo: ndeavour."

My reasoning powers fell to pieces. Both MacCaskill and I had recognised Redpath in the gambling compartment, because he was sitting in the light, with his hat off, and we could see the upper part of his face. The mere fact of his being shut up with Olaffson and the two sailors was sufficient proof for us. The man could hardly want to deceive his own confederates. My disgust at the impudence of the lie gave me courage to say:

"You tell me that you were playing poker with the men, while they never knew who you were?"

"My dear fellow!"—he had a superior, yet pleasant, way of saying this—"of course they knew. They still believe, all three of them, that I am the Reverend Gabriel Lacombe, head of the upland mission of Three Points, a very worthy priest, although sufficiently worldly to take a well-earned holiday—shall we say gold-hunting?"

EVENING

AKSHELAH looked very handsome as she sat on a clean brown coil of rope, with all the colours of the evening playing round her head. I had been silent for so long that my maid at last sought to learn the cause. I told her that I had been thinking of home, and I was sure that Antoine would allow the thistles to take possession of my clearing. Then Akshelah told me a secret.

"After you had gone away my father called the people together," she said, with startling gravity. "The new factor lent axes, and the men were cutting the logs along Split Leaf Creek when I came away in my canoe."

The girl looked at me and laughed, and I had to ask what she meant.

"The chief promised that your new home should be ready before the ending of Nepin; and when my father says a thing, it is done. But Antoine said you would never come back."

These were the people who had sworn to give me their friendship! Akshelah went on regarding me with her fawn-like eyes.

"Ah, I know," she said quickly, delighted at having caught the impression. "You see no owls."

She meant I was suffering from home-sickness. When a camp moves to new ground there are no owl visitors at first, and the people think of their late home where the birds came each night.

"I am glad," said the girl; but when I asked why, she only said again, "I am glad," and laughed and sang until MacCaskill came up, large and hot.

Now Akshelah was not overwhelmed with affection for MacCaskill, whom she considered too serious a being for her world; so she went on singing, by way of protest at his having added himself to our company, and called down upon herself the rebuff, "Quit your noise, gal!" Then she said petulantly:

"It is the song of the god of the green mantles."

"Well, quit it," said the factor. "I've no use for it. Gals are always a-worryin' ye," he muttered morosely. "They'll worry on the Day of Judgment, an' after that if they ain't stopped. Don't matter where ye go, there they are, a-waitin' to worry ye, first chance, or no chance at all."

The old fellow was upset. He had been scouting below, and had encountered Olaffson, resting after a spell of stoking. The Icelander had answered every question with astonishing readiness. He had owned that he was following the fortunes of Father Lacombe, but having no money, was working his passage. Men were not plentiful, and the great majority preferred the well-paid labour of the lumber and fishing

stations to the poor pay and hard life upon the dangerous sea. The unprincipled Olaffson had reiterated his willingness to devote himself, body and soul, to our service, and finally had sworn entire ignorance as to the whereabouts of Redpath.

"I thought the little skunk was a fool," MacCaskill burst forth, "guessin' Redpath supplied the brains of the business. It a'n't so, Rupe. Olaffson swore how Redpath had left him before they got to Gull, promising to meet him there, but never came to time. Swore he hadn't set eyes on him since."

"He's lying," I said.

"Course he's lyin'. It's the way he does it that worries me."

A party came to join us, Lennie, the mate, Dave second engineer, and the steward, old and greasy, with fish scales clinging to his bare arms. Before the convivial plug of tobacco had finished its first round, the mock priest himself appeared, holding the skirt of his cassock in a long white hand. The officers of the ship obsequiously made space.

"What a magnificent evening!" murmured the adventurer, as he took his place among us.

What was his plan?

I was too well accustomed to the radiant atmosphere of my country to give particular notice to the sunset. The warmth was perfect; the ship slipped freely through the tinted water; there were scarcely any insects; over the west blazed the red, the gold, and the blue.

Lennie extended awkwardly the ragged plug torn by many teeth, with the invitation:

"Will ye chew, father?"

"I never chew," came the answer. "But I am not prohibited from smoking."

MacCaskill peered across, and grunted audibly.

Beside the starboard beam behind me some sailors were coiling ropes, and I heard a hoarse voice exclaim, "Gimme a match!" so I knew that Jim Morrison was near.

The presence of the supposed priest stopped conversation. Having lighted his pipe, Redpath looked over the silent group in his gracious manner, then, clasping his fingers together, leaning forward, looking at the sunset, he said:

"Let me hear the experiences of some of you. The mind is necessarily active at evening time. Having lived much in the solitude, each one of you must have felt, at some time or another, the power exerted by solitude upon the imagination."

The men looked unhappy, because this kind of talk was far beyond them. Dave slewed his head round, and whispered to me:

"If the father would curse a bit, I'd make him out, maybe."

Then Lennie stirred, and spoke for the credit of his position and his ship.

"I ain't used to company wi' priests, father," he said apologetically, "but I did run agin a reg'lar boss one time, and I guess it's the sort of experience

you're after. 'Twas away down Grande Marais, time they struck that find of copper. One evening I walked around to take a look at the place, an' struck an oldish chap, a-settin' on a heap of wash, an' a-rubbin' his leg. He was in long leggings, an' a soft hat, an' a flannel shirt, an' a strap 'bout his middle, an' I made out he was a miner, though I allow he didn't talk like one. We give each other the nod and the good weather, an' I said to him, 'What's your line, stranger?' an' he said, sort o' bashful, 'Well, I'm a bishop come to visit the miners.' I got a-laughin' at that, an' course I wasn't a-goin' to be beat, so I spoke up. 'Ye don't want to talk about it, ole boy, but I'm jest a crowned head come around to patronise the circuses.' Then he set a-laughin' fit to choke. But I tell ye, anyone could have folded me up small, an' stuffed me away inter a hand-grip, when the boys come to tell me that same night how the ole chap was a bishop."

A short laugh went up, but evidently the men belonging to the ship had heard the story before.

"You have not altogether grasped my meaning," went on the soft voice, in mild reproof. "It was my idea to learn how solitude affects your minds individually. Let me give you a personal illustration."

He kept his eyes upon the ever-changing colours on the water, and the men looked at one another in distress.

"Experience in a lonely mission, even with much

to occupy my thoughts, has shown me that solitude makes a man dream. They are strange things these dreams, and harmful if allowed to dominate the mind, but the unhappy part of it is that they pass rapidly, leaving merely a sense of melancholy, which, I am ashamed to say, will sometimes interfere with duty."

The adventurer bent his head, coughed, then proceeded:

"One cannot hold and retain these fancies, any more than one can detain and fasten down a shadow. The entire charm of a dream is for the dreamer. He can think over it and enjoy it, but if he be rash enough to undertake a description he will find he can neither begin, nor continue, nor end. He has, in short, nothing to talk about. We have this dream-like picture of Nature around us now." He threw his two hands away from him. "Let us suppose that the most graphic writer the world knows should pen a description of this scene, and that the same should be given us to read. We should find it wanting, and although we may be comparatively illiterate, our imagination, quickened by living long in the solitude, would be able to supply all the deficiencies in this description, so long as we kept to our thoughts."

"Say!" exclaimed Dave miserably; "what language is it, anyhow?"

Was there anything going on in another part of the ship?

The pleasant voice made me sleepy, despite my suspicions.

"I may say that my own temperament is artistically affected by, firstly, such a coloured evening as this; secondly, by moonlight upon the water; and thirdly, by music. How often have we watched the burning pathway of the moon! How often have we longed to take our boat along that road, which we have thought may lead to some unknown land of happiness! You follow my meaning?"

MacCaskill was laughing behind his hand.

"Quite a priest!" muttered Dave admiringly.

"I kin understand a young feller a-settin' out in the moon," said the steward ponderously. "Did it meself one time, when I was worryin' 'bout me little gal, though it only come to her marryin' a feller wi' a tidier face than mine."

The adventurer resumed his high-flown talk. What he said might be nonsense, but it succeeded in producing the impression he desired, and in bringing the majority of his listeners under his influence.

I had not known the real identity of the speaker, his musical voice and delightful manner would have captured me with the spell that held the others.

I closed my ears and used my eyes. The first thing I noticed was that Akshelah had gone fast asleep. My second discovery showed me that the mate was standing behind me, his face perfectly vacant. Redpath still talked, and his sentences be-

came more elaborate. MacCaskill was smoking heavily, his hat tilted over his eyes.

Suddenly an extraordinary impulse caused me to exclaim loudly:

"Who's at the wheel?"

An ominous silence followed, during which I became conscious that my voice had not been untouched with suspicion. Redpath stopped in the middle of a parenthesis, and his head came round. I felt small and weak when his eyes met mine.

Sandy woke up, and Lennie opened his mouth in indignation:

"You're runnin' this ship since when? What you want rattlin' the father when he's preachin'? Ship's all right, ain't it?"

"The young man is excitable," said Father Lacombe magnificently.

"The Icelander we took on at Gull's at the wheel," said Sandy, addressing the captain. "I gave it up to him for a spell. He steers good enough."

MacCaskill shifted himself sharply, and I was sure the idea of treachery entered his mind also.

I had not lived with Nature all my life without learning how to interpret her moods. The silence had become unnatural; the throb of the screw was intensely loud; the atmosphere was as motionless as a sheet of glass; the water had become stagnant; a single mosquito hovered overhead, and gave out a noise like a trumpet. My glance went to the south, where trouble arises. A livid cloud, shaped like a

snake, ascended slowly from the water-line, its "tail" wriggling madly. It was the time of my triumph, and I pointed with a warning cry.

The colours of the sunset settled into a uniform haze of a deep red so intense as to be almost black.

Lennie was up in an instant.

"Dave!" he shouted, his voice pealing fearfully into the hollow silence, "slow her down." He turned to Sandy. "I'll take the wheel."

Only a minute back we had been in daylight, but already gloom had begun to settle, and the air was full of insects.

"A bad night to follow," said Redpath resignedly. It was the night he had looked for. "There will be neither moon nor stars to cheer us on our way."

A crash sounded from the wheel-house, the smash of shivered glass, the thud of a weighty body upon deck, an awful commotion in the overwhelming silence, and the ship swerved off her course like a tired horse.

Lennie ran forward, and almost collided with Olaffson, whose white face looked horrid in the gloom. He carried a big stone, shapeless and water-marked.

"Fell from heaven!" he gasped, "outer the clouds, an' near fixed me. Fell right inter the compass and smashed it up."

The adventurer put out his long hands and took the stone.

"A meteorite," he said slowly. "Such accidents have occurred before."

He turned, and heaved the fragment overboard. I had seen plenty like it upon the beach at Gull.

Lennie was shivering with superstition as he spun the wheel round.

"Stone from heaven above beats all," he muttered. Then he called: "Sandy, bring the spare compass outer my cabin! Get a move on."

The mate went, and was soon back. The compass was not to be found.

Lennie swore desperately, resigned his charge of the wheel, and searched himself, but with the same result.

"You must have mislaid it, captain," suggested Sandy, while the great silence before the wind was heavy upon us.

Then Father Lacombe stepped forward, and extended a small, toy-like thing with his unfailing courtesy.

"I have here, captain, a little compass, which I carry to guide me in my journeys through the forest," he said, anxious for the safety of the ship. "If it will be of any service to you in determining your course, consider it entirely at your service."

SEEKWAH, WHO BLOWS GOOD TO NO ONE

A MURMUR passed through the air, and the last tinge of red light succumbed to the hot haze, while the dry storm raced up, and the cloud came well away from the water, whirling more slowly because its bulk had increased.

I was superstitious enough to feel afraid when Akshelah, her face pale and small with fear, assured me that a priest was one who controlled the occult sciences, and that Redpath had undoubtedly obtained the power by the mere assuming of the character. All evil comes from the south, according to native belief. It is the south wind, Seekwah, who blows good to no one.

"Rupe, I'm going around the ship," said MacCaskill hastily.

He went one way, and I the other.

Approaching the stern hatchway, the figure I feared rose suddenly, and there was no avoiding the black-clad man, who greeted me affectionately.

"My dear fellow, we are doing excellently. You were admiring my scheme and my scholarship, were

you not? Very neat, eh? Altogether beyond those fools, whom we could have held there half the night. You timed your interruption capitally. By Gad! we are working well together."

My courage came up in arms.

"You're not going to keep me here now," I said defiantly.

He moved from the hatchway, all smiles and good humour.

"Good man, you set me a splendid example of keenness! Ah, you have youth and energy to back you! I shan't ask your plan, because I feel convinced we can best attain our end by acting independently. We understand each other. Keep a sharp look-out below, old man. They are a rascally lot, and accidents easily happen during a storm. See you presently."

What was the use of me thinking I could fight this man!

I watched him move away, and was about to descend when a cold pressure came across my face. The water, which had spread away like oil, broke at the same moment into a shiver; the surface ruffled, as though rain were falling. This disturbance was quickly gone, and the stagnation and heat continued, but I knew, by this premonitory breath, that the wind was very near to us.

The lanterns had not yet been lighted below, but a dull gleam suffused from the engine-room, where I could hear the cord-wood dragged up to feed the

furnace. The blue light of a sulphur match flickered, and when I came to a standstill a gaunt head popped over the barrels, and a coarse voice called guardedly :

"Is it O. K., Bill?"

"Yaw," replied the voice behind the blue light still spluttering. "The priest's gone. Gimme some smoke tobaccer."

Just as I reached the two men the big shape of MacCaskill loomed upon us. Leblanc shifted, but not in direction. Morrison smoked on impe[illegible].

"Got a picnic here?" snorted the factor. "Say!" he called to the half-breed, who turned unwillingly, "I've ben wantin' to chew the rag with you. You mind being this part wi' old man Fagge one time?"

It was dark, but when Jim Morrison drew at his pipe I could see, by the glow shed from the bowl, the white terror upon the face of the half-breed. He had shown that fear before.

"Never was jest this part," he said hoarsely.

"You come along the coast, I guess? Now, see here. Jim Petrie never fixed old man Fagge?"

Leblanc gave a faint growl, and I could make out he was shaking his great head.

"We know old man never died natural," went on the cunning factor.

"Talk to 'em, pard!" exclaimed the gruff voice

of Morrison. "They ain't a-gettin' no rope around your neck."

"Jim Petrie was around," growled Leblanc. "An' Redpath an' Olaffson, they were around."

"Maybe Redpath could tell?" suggested MacCaskill.

"If he was here, which he ain't."

A hissing filled my ears, and for one moment I thought steam was being released from the engine.

"He's not so far off, I guess?" said MacCaskill.

Leblanc looked excited, and Morrison interested. They had the look of men who expected to obtain some long-desired information. Both were about to ask a question, when I staggered, fell against my partner, cannoned him over, and the two sailors fell over us, while my ears were filled with noise; the ship creaked dismally, lurched irresolutely, and finally righting herself, settled into the wind and rushed with it. The south wind had broken loose. In that hollow space the noise was so terrific that shouting was ineffectual.

We disentangled ourselves, and crawled away.

The *Carillon* gave me the idea that she was flying up and down a succession of hills. On regaining the deck it was difficult to stand; the wind streamed down, not in heavy blasts, but with one unvarying torrent. The surrounding haze was as dry as a blanket. The current brought strangely to me the voices of invisible men.

"Look at yon cloud in the south! Watch it!" This was Sandy's voice.

Through the overhanging screen I could just see the purple bank threatening from the black line of the horizon. Occasional ghastly patches of foam swept along; lake, sky, and atmosphere were mixed, and whirled together; the *Carillon* plunged and panted through the gloom to the infernal music of the mighty whistling.

Sandy's voice reached me again: "No electricity yet."

I could imagine Lennie struggling with the wheel, and the mate holding Redpath's tiny compass up to his eyes. The haze pressed upon us, like the roof of a cave. To the side I could watch the livid water heaving and roaring against an almost black wall of its rival element. Ikshelah found me out, and clung to me, the terror of racial superstitions upon her.

"We shall go down into the water, and it will choke us!" she screamed.

I had only known my own little river of Yellow Sands, always gentle and pleasant. I had seen Lake Whispering under a storm, but I had never known what it was to fight the violence of its waves. Water now appeared to me for the first time as a power, as a tyrant capable of destroying life with one stunning blow of its wave. It was the same as the sand upon the beach. Lying idly, I could gather a handful, and let it trickle through my fingers in

its fascinating way, and it would leave my hand as lightly as so much water. But when the gales of Tukwaukin came, that fine yellow dust would leap into the wind in a rage, and then I could not face it, because it would choke, and sting, and blind. The Indian belief in a mighty beast, whom the Creator cannot destroy, which spreads along the bottom of the lake, all eyes and jaw, waiting to snatch and devour the men whom the water overwhelms, recurred to my memory.

A deeper sound broke crashing behind the screaming of the dry tempest, and a sheet of fire sprang suddenly into the south.

"We are safe," said Akshelah gravely. "See! The Great Spirit is there. They say he is everywhere, and though he has no power upon the water, he sits upon the rock lighting his pipe, to show us he is there."

The first torrent of wind had passed, and the stream became far less violent. When the *Carillon* came up from an abyss, as though she had been hurled by a mighty hand, I saw a low island, chiefly of basalt, where a few pines grew and some sparse vegetation. Akshelah pointed at the land when we came up the second time. The lightning played about the pines, making the scene as distinct as an evil dream.

Akshelah had her lips against my ear.

"Tell me what they do with the thing which was broken by the flying stone?"

"They find which way the ship must go."

"Which way do we go to reach the river?"

"North-east."

"Then we have lost our way."

I pulled her more closely to me, to make sure of her words, and called on her to explain.

"We are going where the ghost-lights are born."

Due north!

I asked how she knew.

"By the tree-moss on the island," said she, and I was silenced.

This peculiar moss is an unfailing guide to the traveller, because it will only grow upon the north side of trees. Akshelah's wonderful eyes had caught the information as we swept past the ghostly island.

Redpath had destroyed the compasses, and Lennie was steering the ship by the inaccurate instrument the adventurer had provided. We were off our course, and Redpath was having us borne to his own destination.

I told Akshelah to stay while I went in search of MacCaskill, but she disobeyed me as usual. We fought our way along, bending before the wind, but the deck was clear. I came to the wheel-house, and clung to it to keep myself perpendicular. Within I saw two frightened faces—Lennie clinging to the wheel, his coat off, his muscles swelling, his black eyes staring from

a perfectly pallid countenance; Sandy struggling with one hand to control a smoked lantern, with the other to hold the lying compass, so that the captain might see it. Both men were more terrified than suspicious.

I was so injudicious as to yell a suggestion that the storm had carried us out of our course.

Lennie never put his eyes on me. I swung myself round to the mate's side, and the little man shouted:

"See the island?"

I answered in the affirmative, and horror came into his eyes.

"It weren't real. We're right on our course, an' there's never an island there."

I saw Lennie's lips moving, and I knew he was still cursing.

"Where's the priest?" shouted Sandy.

I was as anxious to know as he was.

Sandy yelled on:

"I don't believe in 'em, but I'd like him handy now. If we're agoin' to drown, I'd like to be drownded close beside him."

Lennie threw himself upon the wheel, and when it was steady, tugged at the cord communicating with the engineer. By his doing so it occurred to me that our speed was excessive, despite the wind. The engines did not respond to the order.

A great shout came from Sandy, and the glass of

his lantern shivered against the wheel. He put out his hand, and the captain's face went ghastly, and his eyes half closed with a shudder.

To the left of us, bathed in floods of electric light, I saw a ragged outline of rocks, with black trees battling above, and a great bed of snow-white surf raging beneath.

"Petrie," wailed the mate, out of that tumult, "we'll meet maybe in another world, though I hold to me doubts. Get below anyhow, an' chain up Dave and Pete afore they get any crazier."

I went for the hatchway, and dived down, Akshelah always following. Where was MacCaskill?

The darkness swallowed me. The lanterns had never been lighted. As I set foot below, there came to me out of the darkness, and the blended noises of storm and machinery, furious laughter as of men revelling.

"Muchumeneto is here to-night," said Akshelah, and the girl was right. The Evil Spirit was indeed aboard.

The gong in the engine-room pealed incessantly, but the engineer took no heed. A dark figure controlled the life of the ship, and a long white hand held the lever at full pressure. Pete was not there, Dave was not there. Redpath was engineer, and Olaffson was his fireman!

OLAFFSON looked up and grinned contentedly; Redpath glanced at me sideways. Before him the furnace whirled in white vapour, and the tamarac logs heaved and melted like fat. At the first inward step I saw a human shape pushed away in the corner, and this unconscious figure suggested the chief engineer, his arms and legs secured by wide straps.

Redpath was peering at the indicator as I came in, and reducing the pressure. Then he walked out of the blast of heat, unfastened and pulled off his cassock, removed the hard hat and false hair, and stood up before us by the gleam of the furnace as the English gentleman he professed to be. I thought the Icelander would have fallen in sheer amazement. The adventurer's gentle voice became audible, but its tone no longer suggested friendliness when he addressed me.

"I have told you the truth. He thought I was the priest, and as such has been serving me. I have played the game by myself—always the safest way. You see I have done very well."

"Where is MacCaskill?" I shouted.

Redpath stroked his flabby chin very gently, his eyes upon me all the time. I was ashamed to show fear, but I hesitated, even when Akshelah pushed me slightly forward. Without raising his voice, the masterful man made his words perfectly distinct.

"We shall reach shore before morning, I hope. For our mutual convenience, I shall then recommend a parting, as I find we have not so many sympathies in common as I had supposed. I shall proceed to discover Bonanza. You will travel back to your aboriginal home. My advice is sometimes worth following."

His large face never moved; the cold words seemed as though spoken out of a mask. I could merely repeat my question:

"Where's MacCaskill?"

Again he ignored the question, but he smiled when he said:

"The men, I understand, are enjoying themselves. They appear to have organised a small conversazione, or something of a very similar nature."

A shiver ran along the ship, as a slight resistance met her speed, and she raced on again.

"Sand or gravel?" called Redpath coldly, and Olaffson sulkily called back, "Sand!"

The wind had been dropping all the time, and now singing and hoarse laughter sounded above all the noises of the ship, warning me that I was neglect-

ing my duty and my partner. Redpath went back to the engine.

"I cannot imagine that you propose to resist my plans," he said, in the superior cynical style; and, as I left, he called after me, "Excuse me for troubling you, but if you should meet the second engineer, will you be good enough to tell him where he keeps the oil-can?"

The smoke-room of the ship was placed well up in the stem. The bounding and plunging became shorter as we worked along, dodging the rolling barrels, until a lantern swung from the after overhead, and I pulled Akshelah back so that I might command a view of the cabin, where the oaths and jests became continually louder. The ship might have been freighted with wild beasts.

I saw MacCaskill sitting between a couple of inebriated human parrots; he was diplomatically taking his share in the conversation, and although practically a prisoner, inasmuch as he was detained against his wish, no harm would be likely to befal him so long as he made no attempt to escape. The men were in the mood to be aggressively friendly with anyone who would agree with them, and would be just as ill-disposed should their inclinations be crossed. My hopes began to run very low. The command had been taken out of Lennie's hands. The master of the *Carillon* that night was Captain Corn Whisky.

Who but Redpath would have worked such a

beastly plan into effect? He had methodically smuggled the forbidden stuff on board, had kept it hidden, and had distributed it among these hopeless lake drunkards at what was for him the favourable hour of the electric storm.

Some scud raced across the sky, and between the rack and the lightning came the smoky gleam of the aurora; the wind was so dry as to be stifling when I met it upon deck; the haze was rolling up, and the light increasing.

Lennie stood over the wheel, tired and silent. Sandy advanced cautiously, and said when we met:

"I was jest a-comin' down meself. They've got her a-goin' pretty good now, but while ago she was racin' full rip. Captain's mad enough to kill. You felt that sand bar, eh?"

"Come over here," I said, wishing to take him from the dark-looking captain; and the mate looked at me quickly, and came.

We stood over the hatchway, and I told him to bend and listen. He inclined his ear, his face towards me, and soon I saw a change working in his features. I expected him to act instantly, but he had been frightened before that night, and he was badly frightened now. He went on staring at me, his face stupid.

"There's only one thing what starts men inter that sort o' noise."

"Sandy," I said—"captain, you, and I are sober, and Mac, who's kept below, and Redpath and

Olaffson, who're running this ship, and Pete, whom they've knocked stupid."

The little mate was grey under the quivering lights.

"Redpath! What? Who's Redpath?"

"Father Lacombe, he called himself, and he'll shoot as soon as look."

Sandy moistened his lips.

"Lucky the storm's passin'," he half whispered. "I must tell captain, though he won't do good while he's mad. I tell ye I don't like it."

There was no need to go for the captain. A hoarse shout came to us, and that same moment the ship swerved mightily. There was no one at the wheel; Lennie lurched over the deck, his hands feeling as though he were blind, mastered by his fear and his superstition.

"We're off our course—ben off hours!" he shouted, swaying about the deck, and once I thought he meant to throw himself over. "How many times have ye ben in these waters?" he yelled, swinging upon me as though I had contradicted him. "What do ye know of this part, you liar? Look at yonder, would you?"

"Let him work it off," muttered Sandy.

Where the smoky mist was blown a little aside, I made out the grim outline of the shore, with its trees, directly ahead.

"There's no passage here!" raved the captain, hitting at me. "We shan't ever reach that land.

This is shallow water—sand an' rocks all the way. I've seen 'em peepin' outer the waves as black as Satan, an' I've pulled her off jest in time every half minute. We'll strike a reef next thing, an' be playin' of harps an' wearin' of crowns by morning—"

He was interrupted by a shrill cry from keen-eyed Akshelah. The haze had broken behind, where she pointed wildly with both hands.

"Muchumeneto!" she screamed. "See him! He has been with us, and now he follows. His dominion is upon the water. He watches us. Look! His eye! his eye following us!"

Lennie staggered forward towards the stern, gazing blankly, both hands above his eyes, and panting like a broken horse. I stared into the lessening wind, between the ghost-lights and the gloom, where the tossing dark-blue water came up, and simultaneously we saw the bright eye—red, as if bloodshot—flash, and go out, and flash again as a great wave surged up from the south.

The wind rushed, carrying along far north a weird sound, the voice of that creature, while points of light, like fireflies, darted suddenly into the distant veil of mist, and went out immediately, the creature panting forth its fiery breath as it sweated in pursuit.

Sandy divested the monster of all supernatural attributes—another steamer, undoubtedly the vessel which had come into Gull, too late, as the mate now understood, to catch the *Carillon*. She was flying after us along the line of the storm, knowing that

wherever we passed it would be safe for her to follow. The red eye went on flashing, and the whistle chirped, as the mate expressed it; but we had no lights to show that night, and our whistle would not chirp back.

"They're crazy!" shouted Lennie, swinging back. "Same as us! Where's Pete?"

As he seemed more in a mood to take the information, Sandy gave it carefully.

It seemed to daze the captain, but it had at least the effect of bringing him to his senses.

"Where's Dave?"

"Raddled!"

Lennie nodded, as though it were the answer he had expected, but his face was full of vengeance.

"Pigs don't feed alone," he grimly suggested, stopped, and the mate nodded.

The captain swore very quietly.

"What's the man who works the racket?" he said; and now it was my turn to answer.

He quickly cut me short.

"Get to the wheel, Sandy. Keep her off the rocks if ye can. I'm a-goin' to stop her, or blow her up. Boy, fetch me up that bar!"

I lifted the iron bar used for stretching the ropes, and gave it the captain.

He made a hurried movement towards the hatchway, but before he could begin to descend the hull crashed upon a reef, and we all went down rolling. The ship lifted, groaned with the effort,

dragged herself free, and leapt forward into deep water, game to the end, her pace diminishing because of the shock and the ragged rent which the rocks must have made along her.

Lennie picked himself up, took the bar, and again made for the hatchway, but now with murder on his face.

"Best have a plan, captain!" I called, to conciliate him; and he looked back, stopped, and joined me, possibly because he thought I was more of a fighter than himself.

A MAN FOND OF LIFE

THE stricken ship staggered on through unknown waters, doomed to become a derelict.

Lennie's madness had left him, now that the worst was known; indeed, it was in quite a subdued manner that he said:

"They're fightin' below."

An uproar that might have meant mutiny or the simple devilry of drunkenness broke suddenly at the stem, and we reached the hatch in time to drag MacCaskill upon deck out of the invisible hands of the men.

The language arising from the darkness was terrific and inhuman, and I heard also the drunkards scrambling and struggling to make their feet secure upon the steps.

"Keep 'em down!" shouted MacCaskill, as he began to mop his bleeding head.

"How does she go, Mac?"

"Sinkin', I guess."

A head loomed up, and two huge brown hands felt for the opening.

I lifted my foot, and drove it down upon this

head, and the sailor went falling among his companions, who, unable to distinguish ally from enemy, received him with resounding blows.

Sandy ran up with the covering of the hatch, a grin of triumph on his face, and we clamped it down, while the men battered hopelessly.

"The stern passage is open yet," panted the little man.

"Fasten it," growled Lennie, in the same subdued manner. "We'll keep 'em below, be Jerusalem! an' drown the crowd."

"There's Pete!"

"He shouldn't let hisself be took," snarled Lennie.

The men were tumbling about, making through the darkness for the stern hatchway.

Sandy and I raced them, but as we passed the hot funnel, where the smoke came beating down, a large figure sauntered quietly along to meet us, and the soft voice which I had grown to hate and fear observed:

"So the wind has altogether blown itself out. It was a short storm, and a cheerful one."

The mate stopped and stared, struck dumb.

I shouted at him to come on, lest the men should escape and complicate matters, and he did so, breathing quickly; while the badly-built figure strolled towards the bows, gently stroking his chin, as was his custom.

We jammed down the hatch in time, secured it

by padlocks, and raced back, sweating in the dry air.

Redpath was standing in the centre of the deck, his legs apart to maintain his balance, one hand behind him, the other wandering over his flabby face. He greeted our coming with his amiable smile.

"Capital idea," he said. "I was just remarking to Captain Lennie—a capital idea! Your little plan, Petrie, I'll wager. It is quite necessary for our safety that the men should be fastened between decks. In fact, I came up to suggest it."

I awaited the outburst from Lennie, but only silence followed. There was plenty of sound from the wind and the sea, from the poor ship shivering under us, and from the drunkards fighting together like trapped forest-cats, but not a word from the captain. Lennie's face looked small, and his figure dried up. He tried to stare Redpath in the eyes, but failed. MacCaskill sat upon a skylight, a little spent after his exertions, and from the manner in which his mouth twitched I gathered he was trying to say something. Had Redpath been a man of our own stamp, a man of our own "outside" land, we might have understood him, and we should have certainly beaten him by mere numbers. His superior manner and his calm cynicism frightened us; his powerful will crushed ours; his well-turned sentences, with never an oath in them, spoken so faultlessly, and his magnificent air, made it difficult for any of us to

oppose him either by word or deed. Had it been Olaffson, Lennie would probably have gone mad, and given him what he deserved with his iron bar. But Lennie stood mildly before Redpath like a servant before a hard master.

I cannot imagine that Redpath would ever have shown that he was either disconcerted or encouraged. When he tired of the silence which his presence had imposed, he went on :

"It is my duty to report to you, Captain Lennie, that one of your sailors, the half-breed, Leblanc, taken on by you at Gull, there conceived the dastardly plan of capturing this ship, his fellows aiding and abetting, and of sailing her, after the present company, myself included, had been put ashore—marooned is the expression used upon the salt seas, I believe—of sailing the *Carillon*, I repeat, to a certain locality, where he believes gold is to be found. Before putting away from Gull, he smuggled on board a quantity of liquor, with which he intended to stimulate the courage of his men at the critical moment. As you are aware, captain, these men cannot move far, or indulge in the simplest mental process, without having recourse to spirits. It was fortunate that I discovered Leblanc's plot some time back. I assumed the disguise of a priest, as I was determined to frustrate this mutinous and piratical plan, and deceived not only the sailors, but your far more acute selves. To my sorrow I found myself outwitted, though I overcame the chief engineer

when he was mad with liquor, and have since done my best to run the ship into safety, until the happening of the deplorable catastrophe which now threatens to sink us. It was impossible to stop the ship, because the mechanism became unworkable owing to an accident arising from my own ignorance."

Redpath turned and fronted the factor.

"I have an apology to make to you, sir," he went on. "By an unfortunate and inexcusable error, I imagined that you were in league with the mutineers."

Redpath stopped as abruptly as he had commenced. He had spoken his carefully-prepared sentences with the air of a man who has done much good in his time, but who would scorn to seek after praise.

Akshelah pushed me aside impatiently, and stood out before us, small and determined. A bright colour animated her face, and her eyes were scornful.

"You stand and listen to him, and call yourselves men," she said angrily. "That man is a liar. He is laughing at you, because he knows he is stronger than you all. You are cowards, but he is the greatest, because he only dares to fight with his tongue."

Then I saw Redpath's face change, and a faint flush rose under his loose skin. He gave one short

laugh, and set his glance full upon the girl; but his power did not help him there.

Akshelah stepped out firmly, and stopped when within reach, until I went cold with dread lest he should put out his hand and suddenly shoot her. But Akshelah had no such fear, because she understood the man.

"I will show them," she said fiercely, showing her little teeth, this strong young cat—"I will show them that you are not a man at all."

She lifted her shapely brown hand, this Indian maid of mine, leant gracefully forward, and punished the English gentleman in the manner I have since seen described as boxing the ears. It was no light touch, because she struck only once, and I have no doubt but that the man's cheek stung him.

Redpath made no motion of retaliation, but he laughed easily, took off his hat to the girl, raised his big shoulders, and muttering something about "mixing in savage company," walked away, with an eye behind, and leaned carelessly against the side to await the next turn of events. Akshelah had beaten him before us all, had made a fool of him, as the saying goes, and our nerve improved in consequence.

It was only when we set ourselves to think of action that we discovered our helplessness. There was nothing to be done, except to wait and drift until the land should stop us. Evidently the water

was gaining slowly. The pursuing steamer had slackened speed, perhaps because she was sure of us, or perhaps, as Sandy suggested, she, too, had been crippled.

Lennie, with all his spirit gone, mourned the loss of his ship and his reputation. He was almost in tears, and I overheard him muttering to my partner:

"Ben on the water all me time, an' never made more'n a livin'. Never lost any other boat, 'cept a steam-tug ten year ago, an' she was cranky. Now I'm gettin' old, wi' nothin' saved. Never get 'nother job. May as well go down wi' the ole ship, an' be bit by fishes."

"Shake 'em off, Bob," advised the factor. "Things ain't so messed, if ye come to watch. We ain't a-going to sink. We're a-going to run on sand yonder, and the ole ship'll be better than ever when they've fixed a patch across her."

A chill entered the wind, as the atmosphere shifted and the light became stronger. Looking out, I beheld a fine sight. Across our bows ran the land in a curving line, a bank of trees without a break, with the water white below, and the aurora above. An island ran out to port; here a narrow passage of smooth water led up to a broad silver beach. Any idea of running the ship through this passage and beaching her upon the sand was precluded by the sight of a shoal of rocks guarding the entrance effectually against anything larger than a canoe.

The keel dragged once upon sand in passing, but there was not enough to stop us. We passed so close to the rocks that I could see the green slime dripping off the black jaws, and some great pines, hanging forward at an angle that looked impossible, brushed upon the mast, and rained bunches of spines and small cones upon deck.

The broken-down captain refused to make any effort; Sandy had taken the wheel, and was doing his best to keep us off the visible dangers. When I came up, he jerked his head back, with the question:

"How's she comin'?"

Afar along the white haunt of shadows, I saw the ghostly object, riding up and down, her single light twinkling, and a gust passed, bringing the deep sound of her panting.

"She's not gaining," I said.

"I guess," said the mate gravely—"I guess we're the first steamer what's ever fooled over these waters, an' she's the second."

"Where are we?" I asked, but the mate did not know. He gave his opinion that we were coming to territory never before visited by white men.

When I looked upon the silent shape of Redpath, I doubted the statement. Probably three men on board were visiting this mysterious region not for the first time, and my dead father had probably been here, with the old man, Joe Fagge, the gold-finder.

"She's slowin' all the time," said the mate, with

dreary triumph. "Maybe the fire's gone out. Say! Listen below."

Shouting and blasphemy had turned into yells of terror, and the battering upon the hatches became furious.

"The water's worryin' 'em," muttered Sandy.

Then Redpath considered it his turn to play. A change had certainly come over the strong-minded man; he was frightened, and he could not altogether hide it; his hands worked uneasily, and he continually cast side glances towards me, as I thought, but I came to realise that I was standing on the line between his eye and the pursuing steamer. It was astonishing that he had not noticed her before.

"Captain Lennie," he said loudly, "I appeal to you, in the cause of humanity, to unfasten the hatches."

Lennie made no sign of hearing, but MacCaskill said gruffly:

"You was wantin' 'em closed down yourself not such a while ago."

"I considered the men might be dangerous," said Redpath. "Now they are too frightened to do us any harm."

"There's Pete below," muttered Lennie remorsefully. "Pete was allus a good pard."

"And I guess you took him foul," exclaimed MacCaskill boldly. "I guess you knocked him down, and then came up to tell captain he's drunk."

"As a gentleman, it is impossible for me to reply," said Redpath.

"You give the boys that liquor, you and Olaffson," went on the factor. "You set 'em around me, and started 'em to hustle me inter the cabin, 'cause you wanted me kept outer the racket."

"Perhaps you believe these romantic charges?" suggested Redpath.

"I believe a pard," muttered Lennie unhappily.

"You are the captain of this ship. I put myself in your hands. Release the men, and charge me before them."

"He's got the men on his side," I called, backing up my partner, yet never daring to look towards my enemy.

I heard a soft, reproachful voice: "Petrie, I am surprised at you."

Lennie stirred, and walked over to the stern hatch. Going upon his knees, he shouted, and his voice stopped pandemonium at that end.

"Captain," whined one of the miserables, "open up, for mercy! The water's a-runnin' around, an' ter'ble cold, an' we'll be drownded."

"Where's Dave?" shouted Lennie. "Tell him to back astern. Where's Pete?"

"Some feller's locked the door of the engine-room, and Pete's tied up inside, they say, captain. Dave's raddled. The water's a-comin' in dreadful."

"Who gave ye the liquor?"

"Olaffson," whined the voice.

"Revolting creature," said Redpath.

"Most of us ain't very drunk, captain."

"Olaffson is, of course, Leblanc's partner in this miserable undertaking," continued Redpath.

A sharp gust came suddenly, and silt again jarred the keel.

"Mind out!" yelled Sandy, and we looked ahead.

A luxuriant screen of vegetation spread above and around, blotting out the light. As we entered the arch of gloom, a cold sensation thrilled me, and this outwardly beautiful, but treacherous, shore asserted its malignancy. A horrible odour enclosed us, and when we drifted nearer the silent trees, and could distinguish hundreds of naked poles springing out of a beach of putrid mud, the loathsome atmosphere became so dense that it was horrible to draw breath.

In helplessness and silence we awaited the end. The *Carillon* drove fast into the mud, brought up among the trees, and there stayed, her screw feebly beating up the half-liquid filth. A faint gleam of light, just powerful enough to struggle through the dense roof of vegetation, lit, after a ghastly manner, the straight unvarying tree-stems, none greater in circumference than the *Carillon's* mast, the fearful stagnant mud-flat, and the gigantic crab-spiders, like the nameless things of a dreadful dream, scuttling on long bent legs noiselessly.

"It is the place where the devils dance," said Akshelah, in horror.

The men between decks were being well punished for their intemperance. Pitiful were the supplications that ascended.

"Stinkin' mud! Oh! come-a-help!" yelled one voice which sounded familiar.

"Lord-a-save! great awful bugs crawlin' everlastingly."

Then the little steamer danced over the black and white water, and touched the outer edge of the utterly black shadow. They must have seen us by the matches we kept striking to light our pipes, though the tobacco tasted of decayed matter, and the flames burnt blue.

Redpath was well and completely beaten. Perfect and polished gentleman to the end, he removed a clean white handkerchief from his mouth, and said:

"Captain Lennie. My dear sir," with added warmth, "I will throw myself on your clemency, as a man grievously attacked by unjust suspicion. As a passenger upon your ship, and as a man who has done all the little possible for our common safety, I appeal to you to return good for good, and side with me now."

"Pshaw!" muttered MacCaskill, and Lennie nodded approval at the factor's exclamation.

A powerful voice rolled solemnly over the mud and water, and reached us through the poisoned atmosphere:

"*Carillon!*"

Sandy, whose lungs were strongest, returned the hail.

"Have you a man name of Tankerville?"

The shout went back in the negative.

"Have you a man disguised as a priest?"

"Persecution follows me," Redpath remarked indifferently. "Petrie, your father was the better man, though I regret to say he was a murderer! I fear, gentlemen, I must bid you all good-bye!"

"There's a reward," rolled the menacing voice out of the fetid air.

"That," said Redpath, more solemnly than I had ever heard him speak—"that is distinctly ironic. After looking for money all my life, I become a base article of commerce in my old age."

"He can't escape anyhow," muttered MacCaskill, with a grin of satisfaction.

"Good-bye to you!" called Redpath, turning to make a gesture with his white hand. At the side of the ship he paused, and gravely adjusted the handkerchief round his mouth and nose.

A gasp of amazement and horror went up from the deck. The adventurer had gone!

We rushed across, sickening, and saw him below. He sank out of sight into the unutterable putrescence, dragged himself up, congealed with living filth, struggled on, half swimming, half dragging his body through the accumulated vegetable rot of centuries, pulling himself on by the smooth trunks of the

trees, until he had lost all resemblance to any living thing, human or animal, and the great spider-like things, with the red stalk eyes and long crooked legs, darted at him noiselessly. Out of his heaving, reeking track ascended a miasma sufficient to poison a population. The ghost-light played once more faintly upon the unnatural object writhing itself away to liberty. Then it was gone, hidden in the outer stench and darkness.

MacCaskill spat violently, and pressed a hand to his aching forehead. Horror-struck, he muttered:

"That's a man who's wonderful fond of his life!"

IV

AN UNKNOWN LAND

WEIRD HOLLOW

THE officers and crew of the *Carillon*, our three selves, with Inspector Hanafin and men of the *Firefly*, made a landing into the country of perpetual day.

It was severely cold, and rain fell, each drop stinging like ice, when we came upon a beach of vivid white sand, everywhere strangely marked with black fragments of petrified wood, which at a distance closely resembled rocks. Some ragged bush spread away to the north, and to the south dreary shallows, where large-leaved plants floated. Before us a razor-back succession of sand-hills, overhung by a clammy mist, hid all that was beyond.

"We must push along," said Inspector Hanafin, gathering his fur-lined cloak about his uniform. "This is a malarial fever coast. Keep the mosquitos off as much as you can."

The *Firefly* was anchored in the natural harbour made by a long reef.

Upon landing from our boats, most of the men went down on their stomachs, and sucked up the

unwholesome water. They were surly after their dissipation, and awed by the presence of the inspector and his two troopers, who had pursued Redpath across so many leagues of land and lake.

We had released the sailors directly the police had come aboard; and when we had taken some provisions, MacCaskill and I loading ourselves with our tools and our packs, we made haste to desert the poisonous mud-flats.

While we were making our way towards the sand-hills I looked for Olaffson, whom I had seen on the boat; but the Icelander had already disappeared, and I guessed he would work his way along the shore to satisfy himself that Redpath was dead. I made no comment, because I was glad to be rid of him.

We were on our way to find a camping-place outside the miasma of the shore. MacCaskill, who had been tramping beside Lennie, joined me, and whispered:

"Rupe, this is the beach Redpath was makin' for."

I ought to have been surprised, but somehow I wasn't. I was tired and indifferent.

"All right," I said wearily.

As we toiled up the loose sand, I saw the red tops of the willow bush peeping out of the "smoke." We came over, descended through the curiously thick fog, and suddenly walked right out of it into a pure and clear atmosphere and a much

warmer temperature. Beyond the sun was shining; below spread a large hollow, its carpet a startling green, its slopes covered with a luxuriant vine, which crossed and tangled confusedly. The shifting sand changed to firm ground, which produced a tall, stiff grass, the stems of darkest green, the points hard and sharp, and black as ebony. The slope we were on resembled the back of an immense porcupine.

We had not gone far before the men began to curse.

"Poison-grass," said the inspector carelessly, as well he might, because his own legs were protected by riding-boots. "We shall soon be away from it. Walk straight, men, and tread it down firmly."

"The devil of a country!" muttered MacCaskill.

"I don't hold wi' the bugs," complained Pete, who was fairly capable, but still nervous after his knock-down. "I don't worry over grass-bite, I don't; but I hate to watch these yer black bugs."

Long narrow insects writhed everywhere between the grass stems; they were so numerous that we could not walk without treading across one or more, and they were pulpy and unpleasant to crush.

"Never mind the bugs," said Hanafin, who, I learnt, was a genuine specimen of an English gentleman. "See that speckled plant, hemlock? Everything seems more or less poisonous upon this bit of British territory. By Jove, look here!"

The ground fell away suddenly, and we arrived above a succession of pools, joined one to another by belts of swamp, the latter decorated by luxuriant white moss. The black water was absolutely stagnant and unreflecting; large bubbles rose continually, to burst, upon reaching the surface, with a perfectly audible report. Stranger than these bubbles were numerous solid-looking globes—a few opal-white, the majority a very dark blue, others a dirty grey, all curiously marked with shifting designs of every imaginable colour, though the blue tint always predominated. These globes bounded over the pools without marking the surface with the smallest ripple, just like rubber balls bounding over the ground. Immediately a jumping globe touched the moss it vanished; if it safely negotiated the morass, it bounded hilariously over the next pool; if it fell short in its next jump, it invariably paid the penalty of failure by becoming extinct.

"The hell of a country!" muttered MacCaskill.

"Not at all," said Hanafin, who knew everything. "Nature discovered in her own laboratory. We are near the magnetic circle, and I suspect two of the earth's currents meet at this hollow. Dip your hand into that pool," he said, turning to me.

"Do not," said Akshelah.

I did not like the look of the thick, unmoving water. The inspector drew aside his cloak, passed down before me, and dipped in his own hand. I saw

his shoulders lift, and his arm jerked back, before he drew up smilingly, letting loose a long breath.

"This water ought to cure the sickest man on earth," he said.

Curiosity tempted me, so I slid down and cautiously inserted my fingers. The water was glutinous and tepid, but nothing happened. The inspector looked at me with a faint smile.

"Keep your hand in, but come off the rock."

I stepped off, and, when my feet touched the wet moss a strong shock thrilled through my system, forcing back my arm, and passed in and out of my body and across my shoulders, making me tingle all over.

"An electric pool," said Hanafin, when I gave a gasp of relief to find that the water showed no inclination to imprison my hand. "To-night the little globes will resemble so many arc-lights, and the black pools will be like mirrors with the sun upon them."

Coming down into the hollow, towards the fringe of bush where we intended to make our camp, we became stopped by a ridge of blood-red rock, which rose abruptly like a wall. We thought nothing of the obstacle, until we made the discovery that the barrier was not rock, but a kind of slimy clay, which melted in the warmth of the hand, and left the fingers stained scarlet. MacCaskill muttered yet another reference concerning the country, while

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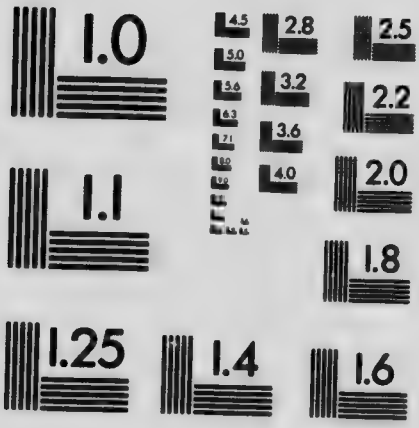

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Lennie, who was utterly played out, suggested camping where we were.

"When you can't face your enemy, find a way round," said the inspector. "Norman, go and explore."

The trooper swung round, astounding me by his ready obedience. He was soon back to report that he had found the way round.

We reached the edge of the bush, made a clearing and a fire, and spread open our packs.

The inspector selected the best-sheltered spot, called, "Norman, wake me when breakfast is ready," rolled up his fur-lined cloak for a pillow, spread a silk handkerchief over his face, and went to sleep.

Lennie and the inspector intended to return to the pestilential shore to drag the *Carillon*, if possible, off the poisonous mud-flat. The ship was owned jointly by the Northern Fishing, the Outside Limit Lumber, and the Hudson Bay Companies — all wealthy corporations.

Later on, I ventured to ask Hanafin what Redpath had done to deserve the vengeance of the law, but the inspector only looked at me smilingly over his cigarette, and propounded a question of his own:

"I suppose not even a young and agile man could hope to escape out of that quagmire?"

I expressed my doubts, and the soldier-policeman went on:

"In that case, we won't discuss the man or his doings. We have a theory that it is ungenerous to

speak evil of the dead, who can't hear, and who don't care. If the same sentiment were extended to the living, who can hear, and who generally do care, there would be less work for my profession."

However, MacCaskill spoke differently.

"He ain't dead, Rupe. Folks like him never do die. Anyhow, when you make dead sure such a one's snuffed out, he always comes up again. If Redpath had got to work, and run off into clean bush, maybe he'd have fell some place, and bruke a leg, and starved, just 'cause no one would have ever looked for it. It don't look possible for him to escape outer that mud before he chokes, and that's just the reason why I look for him to turn up again. Now, where's that little skunk of an Olaffson?"

"Gone to find Redpath," I said; but MacCaskill laughed.

"He don't give a darn about Redpath. He's gone inland, in the direction we oughter be a-going now."

"He doesn't know the way."

"Redpath told him, likely. If he ain't, Olaffson will smell it out for himself. Say! You and me must get a move to-night, and slip away quiet when the boys are asleep."

We had supper at the usual hour of six, and afterwards gathered round the fire, to smoke and talk before sleep.

Inspector Hanafin warned us to prepare for a local thunderstorm, with other electric manifestations

in the hollow; but Sandy, who held himself weather-wise, asserted that the "night" would be clear. Said the inspector:

"You forget that this hollow is apparently directly influenced by the magnetic North Pole. The magnetic change occurs once every twenty-four hours, as a result of the free electric currents in the atmosphere above, and so, directly the aurora rises, we shall have some kind of an electric display. Wait until the sun pretends to set."

The sun left us about one hour before midnight, and straightway the trouble began. There was, of course, no darkness, yet the ghastly effulgence down the hollow could not have been mistaken for honest light; the atmosphere became frequently flooded by a curious radiance, grading from the palest to the darkest shade of blue, sometimes cross-hatched by shadows, which I could not help thinking had no natural right to be present. The bush behind our camp was "naked," that is to say, the foliage was all overhead; there was no undergrowth; the bare slim boles supporting the fungus-like masses made the bluff resemble a cave filled with stalactites; a lambent light quivered and played away into the distance, running softly about this nakedness, changing its direction, intensity, and tint many times in a minute, while a series of diminutive explosions cracked here and there above. The vines spread along the open side, and the long runners now appeared to be rising and falling, like

the surface of the lake when ruffled by wind. A vibration passed periodically through the ground. When I stood up I could sometimes see the arc-globes, whenever they jumped higher than usual, in their mad, irresponsible dance over the pools.

The men were as frightened as they could be, and one of Hanafin's troopers expressed his opinion that the mouth of the pit lay in the immediate neighbourhood. What he meant I could not tell; but Akshelah assured us that the Evil Spirit always chose such a spot to disport himself in with his associates. We should be safe, she said, so long as we kept away from the water, and if we sought shelter upon rock, directly we saw any unnatural shape. There were rocks hard by.

These rocks were of pure silica, and as it had been observed that the factor and myself carried mining implements, Lennie linked the circumstances, and questioned my partner. MacCaskill confessed that he had tired of an unremunerative employment, and decided to make a prospecting trip, "the boy spoilin' to get away after the ole man hopped." He would not own that we knew anything, but while he talked I made the discovery that Leblanc and Morrison had broken themselves from the circle, and were listening as closely as they dared. I caught also the inspector's keen eyes fixed upon me, and I had the sense to know that the clever Englishman was forming his own deductions from

my partner's speech and my manner. But he asked no question.

"I always wonderful well wanted to look for the dirt," admitted Lennie; "but minin' luck's too queer, an' a man gen'rally quits poorer than he started. I used to read that Garden of Eden mines chapter outer me Bible when I was a younker—read it hundreds of times, I guess I did. Used to make me mouth run to read all about the gold and the diamonds a-lying around Eden; an' I guess Adam just loafed around sorter careless, an' let all the stuff lie."

"Bet you Eve didn't," said the factor, having his own ideas concerning women. "She'd pick up a chunk o' yaller, and set it against her arm, and hello to Adam, 'Say! how's that?'—"

He was knocked off by a mighty explosion. The air became dense and very hot, and permeated by a sour odour, while an intense blue light glared strongly out of the bluff, and made every face ghastly. Our camp fire blazed up as though a blast of wind acted under it. For a minute all was shouting and confusion.

"I'd just as soon be on the *Carillon*," said Lennie. "I'm out of this."

The cold-blooded inspector laughed. The light thrilled again, a darker blue. Hardly had it gone when Pete, whom we considered stupid after his late ill-treatment, wiped his mouth and exclaimed:

"Captain, there's a ter'ble nasty sorter black beast on yon tree a-watchin' of us."

We looked, in the spirit of unbelief, and I suppose we all saw a dark object, something a little thicker and blacker than the shadows surrounding it, slide noiselessly down the smooth tree. I know we rushed at once for the rocks, and I confess that I was one of the first to reach the shelter which Akshelah believed to be infallible. It says a good deal for our credulity when I say that in less than a minute we were all clambering over the quartz, the men who could not obtain a first footing literally blubbering with fear, all except Hanafin, who never shifted a muscle, and his troopers, who were forbidden by their discipline to leave the officer. The shapeless black object lay at the bottom of the tree like a heap of mud.

"Say!" muttered one of the men; "think it's *him?*"

"Course it is, you fool," answered the chorus.

Hanafin got up, the lights flickering around him, and a warning cry was issued by the choir upon the rocks. The figure stirred, and hopped queerly over the ground, stopping by the fire, and there warmed itself. Hanafin held out a biscuit; the creature grabbed furiously, and finished it with gulps like a dog.

The inspector spoke, but received no reply.

"I saw it a-settin' up above quite a time," said Pete unhappily. "It was a-settin' lonesome, a-lickin'

its paws an' watchi. 'Tis one o' they pesky things what looks for men sleepin' out, an' sucks 'em dry."

It was not easy to tell the creature's exact size, because it remained bent, and its face and body were thickly covered with hair. When Hanafin called again the creature yapped, and put out a hand for more food. The inspector complied with the demand, then turned to us with the grave assurance that the visitor had once been a fellow-man.

"Lost, gone crazy, and become a beast," he said.

Nobody believed him, and Akshelah scoffed openly when asked if she knew what he was.

At that time, while surrounded by all the strange sights of that weird hollow, I was convinced with the others that the supernatural was enjoying full sway, and that what then occurred to us was entirely due to the mysterious appearance of the hairy, speechless being. A description may sound grotesque, but to me at the time it was more a thing to shudder at than laugh over.

A thunderstorm had been in operation for some time, the lightning being apparently flung just over the trees out of the low clouds which separated the hollow from the outer country. The thunder took the form of constant explosions, entirely different from the customary long-drawn-out rumbles and echoes. In addition to this intensely local

storm, erratic sheets of light constantly flooded the bush, and the peculiar sour odour never failed to follow.

An unusually brilliant blue current thrilled, just as Hanafin walked round the fire to interview the monkey-like monster. Instantly the inspector vanished, and with him the entire camp. The fire, the bluff, the ground, everything was wiped out, even the rock we stood on; we might have been suspended on the edge of a precipice, peering hopelessly into a thick sea fog; the world seemed to have floated away from us, leaving us standing erect in space.

Whether the other men had any sensation beyond fright, I cannot say; but for my own part I felt mightily exhilarated, and with the elation of the sudden strength that thrilled into my body, as scores of minute blue sparks broke from our persons, I had a mad desire to relieve my energies by [illegible]ng up each one of my companions—Akshelah, [illegible] to me, excepted—and hurling them one [illegible] into the apparent abyss.

What would have happened had I attempted to do so is again impossible to say, because the gulf which had been so remarkably fixed about us, which entirely divided us from the planet our world, which blinded and deafened us, and made us helpless castaways upon the invisible rock, was purely magnetic. Backward we could move, but not an inch forward. There did not appear to be

any particular resistance; it was not at all like trying to force a solid body; we were simply unable to move. The magnetic barrier was non-conducting; sound would not travel through it any more than eyesight. For all the assistance we could have rendered Inspector Hanafin, and for all our knowledge of what was happening on the other side of the current, we might have been placed respectively at the opposite poles of the earth.

The resisting fluid swept away with all the suddenness of its coming; and at the withdrawal of the magnetic force, the men scurried away from the rocks like so many jack-rabbits worried by a dog.

MacCaskill whispered to me hurriedly, and as we both preferred to face the chance of fever on the shore, rather than the unknown powers of natural forces, we made straight for our tools and packs, caught them up and ran, Akshelah leading our flight, away up the slope from the lights and explosions of the hollow, through the vines that caught at our legs and arms, and thrilled us like so many electric wires; past the pools that were black no longer, but living and dazzling, and where the gleaming balls were leaping excitedly; through the poison-grass, quivering and stiff in the electric air, and emitting bright sparks when touched by our hurrying legs; over the sand-dunes, and so out under the aurora, where the wind moaned out of the lake, and brought the foul odour of malaria through the "night."

We looked down from the summit of the sand-hills, and, as in the early morning, the hollow was concealed by its roof of cloud, which spread beneath our feet like a smoky floor. We could make a good guess as to what was taking place in the depths by the manner in which the clouds were continually bathed in blue light, by the distant, but faintly audible, explosions, and the sour odour arising, until we turned to face the far more noisome miasma ascending from the beach of the great Lake Peace.

MATERIAL GHOSTS

ON the day following our flight from the hollow, MacCaskill and I awoke with dry mouths, tormenting heads, and irritated bodies, the result of camping within the influence of the coast. Had Akshelah not been with us, we should have done no travelling that day. She collected some plants, squeezed their feeble juices into a tin mug, and made us swallow the abominable mixture. We were both violently sick, but at the end of an hour the fever left us. The exercise of walking restored us completely, though it was very possible that the healthy air, which met our faces as we ascended, had much to do with the cure.

For five days we journeyed over the Bad Lands, and during the whole of that time we did not sight a living thing, except insects in their millions, some white-headed eagles and magpies, and a few loons over the water, which was everywhere abundant. The country was heaped with rocks, interspersed with bluffs of arctic pine, and spruce, scraggy and stunted, the roots buried in thick tufts of the monotonous white moss. Only a few plants, re-

sembling bunches of yellow feather, sucked an existence in sheltered niches; and a little bleached flowering grass, as dry as the rock, wearied our eyes all that journey.

At the end of the fifth day we came to the summit of an endless ridge, and looked down upon a gully, the sight of which made our hearts beat faster, because, by my father's plan, we believed that we were then standing outside the door of Bonanza.

A narrow stream trickled among the rocks, and green banks of turf rose on each side invitingly. Here the vegetation was far more luxuriant; there were thickets of cranberry bush, hung with yellow and scarlet fruit, with raspberries nearer the water. Akshelah caught some arctic trout, strange-looking fish, having great fins like wings; we picked berries by handfuls, and fared luxuriously. When we settled to rest upon the cool, clean grass, I felt more content than at any time since our landing at Gull.

We noticed one curious thing while walking along the gulley to the camping-ground we had selected. We passed into a belt of cold wind, blowing strongly across the gulley, just as in swimming one enters an icy cold current of water. We escaped this wind almost directly, but we had time to observe that no vegetation flourished where it crossed. This wind cut a clean dry track across the coulee, and where it struck the rocks it was

gradually wearing a cave by the power of its blast.

It was chilly, and as we sat round our fire after supper this passage of wind began to trouble me. I went on thinking, and presently exclaimed involuntarily, because I never liked to show that I cultivated an imagination:

"Is there anything in dreams?"

MacCaskill looked at me over his pipe, and I added:

"Can anyone dream of a place he has never seen?"

"Oh, no," answered Akshelah. "When we sleep we see our people, who have gone to the Great Spirit's country. Our people do not speak to us; but when they come they make signs, so that we may know that the season is good for them, and that they are having plenty of hunting. The ghost of the brave smokes the ghost of his pipe, but the man himself, and the pipe itself, have been destroyed in the fire."

MacCaskill was no deep thinker. He merely discharged a cloud of smoke, grunted, and expressed his opinion that dreams were "no use anyhow."

I saw before me two shining walls of rock, towering and shutting out the light, and I shivered, because the wind, which was whistling past, became very cold. I understood more than I could express, and when I tried to think again, my mind stopped short at an improvised bed in a cleft of the rock,

a few bushes tossing just above, and the wind always pouring, and rushing, and moaning.

"I guess we're almost there," I said abruptly, and the factor started, looked at me curiously, and removed his pipe.

"I had a mind to say that." He spoke more slowly than usual. "That yonder should be the Canyon of the North Wind, and up there we should strike Mosquito Pass. We'll know to-morrow."

Akshelah interposed. Without looking at us, she held out her arms against the faintly blue sky, and called:

"You see the ridge where the sun-colours are resting? I saw a man stand there, but while I looked he was gone. He is coming this way."

We stood up and looked, straining our eyes along the defile, but could see nothing, and MacCaskill was disposed to think the girl mistaken.

"It's no use shifting," he said. "He will have seen our fire."

"He is coming slowly," said Akshelah.

Again she pointed, and now we saw the dark object crawling down the slope.

"See!" exclaimed the girl. "He is very weak."

Directly the man entered the line of wind, the current swept him off his legs. We did not go out to help him, because we could not anticipate meeting a friend. Presently, the figure blundered up, and we recognised the ugly face of Jim Morrison. As usual, his own demands were uppermost.

"Gimme some grub; do ye now," he whined, sinking upon the grass. "I'm 'most starved."

"You have come through plenty of berries," said Akshelah scornfully.

"And you can pick 'em for yourself," added MacCaskill. "We ain't runnin' a gen'ral store to fellers that start trackin' us. Your pard Leblanc with ye, I guess?"

The sailor blasphemously asserted that they had not followed, but had escaped from the hollow after us, and had not dared to return, because they feared punishment for their share of the work on the *Carillon*.

"All the boys have run," declared Morrison, but we knew this was a lie. "We did track ye jest a piece," he confessed at last.

"Ye don't track another piece," said the factor. "Ye get back to your pard, and sling yourselves out er this country before morning. We don't call for a couple of dogs sniffin' after us."

At first, when a hoarse cry came along the defile, a distant human shout of undeniable fear, I suspected another plot; but Morrison, who had been stripping a bush with both hands, and gulping down the fruit in a beast-like manner, stopped and turned his head, blenching with unmistakable terror.

"'Twas Gedeon!" he gasped.

He went on to explain that he had left the half-breed, who had broken down with hunger

and fever, upon the rocks on the far side of the ridge. Akshelah busily dispersed and stamped out our fire, and MacCaskill began to aid her, while I looked on stupidly, remembering that I was seeing how men live.

"Maybe he saw something to fright him," muttered the factor, but not as though he believed in what he said; while Morrison forgot his own demands, and began to whimper.

We determined to go to Leblanc's assistance, more, I fancy, because we were curious to discover what other force might be in the field, than from any desire to save the half-breed, whom we knew had been in this place twice before together with his master. We made a cache of our tools and supplies beneath a bush, scattered the dying embers of our fire, and began the ascent, passing on this occasion above the spot where the wind struck. The night was perfectly calm, the light soft and clear, although, it being well after midnight, a few shadows were faintly marked under the rocks. That the half-breed was alive soon became evident, because his shoutings and frightened appeals scarcely ceased for a moment. Presently Morrison sang out, and Leblanc's note altered.

"Jim! Jim! I've ben hit wi' a knife!"

Morrison was inclined to consider his own well-being, but we pushed him ahead of us. Hard by a patch of strong-smelling bush we found Leblanc, half in the light, half in the dim shadow, and writhing

like a worm. An examination showed us that the man had been stabbed in the fleshy part of the shoulder; it was a very slight wound, the would-be murderer having evidently aimed at the back of the neck, and been frustrated by a sudden move.

"Who did it, pard?" Morrison called huskily, and backing away uselessly. "Who come to hit yer?"

"The country's chocked wi' ghosts!" wailed Leblanc, his face ghastly. "Old ghosts, an' young ghosts, mostly old. One hit me dirty wi' a knife as I set right here. I never see him. He hit quick, an' was away. He'd have come to hit again if ye hadn't scared him. Jim, I be bleedin' dreadful!"

"Dirty coward!" muttered MacCaskill. "Ain't nothing much worse'n a mosquito prick. Do ye good, ole woman. Let the fever outer ye."

"I be dyin'," went on Leblanc, blubbering. "I ain't got religion. Jim, tell us if there's a God."

"There's a God for decent folk. None for the like of you," said the factor. "Shake yourself up, and tell who hit ye."

"I didn't see nobody. I heard a move, an' made to turn, when it come right inter me shoulder all hot. A ghost it was, sure. They tell how awful some of 'em do bite. I don't know where I be a-goin', not havin' religion, an' don't know whater say. Oh, Jim, tell us whater say!"

I stepped out.

"Tell what happened to old Fagge the last time you were here," I said.

This was the first occasion I had actually spoken to the half-breed since the early morning at Gull, when I had mistaken him for the Icelander. The wounded man went on writhing, and tried to drag himself under cover by means of the long tufts of white grass.

"Is it a dyin' confession, say?" he whined. "The last talk o' me, Gedeon Leblanc, what never had no luck?"

"I guess you ain't long for this world," said the factor grimly.

"Talk at 'em, pard," piped Jim Morrison. "Tell 'em what ye know."

"We know you come here twice with ole man Fagge," continued MacCaskill, smoothing the way for him. "We know you've been followin' us. Well, I guess there's lots of gold for the crowd, and if you talk straight, and don't die quick, we won't stop ye from stakin' out your claim, after we've done first choosin'."

Morrison was staggered by such generosity, which removed the necessity for much base plotting.

"Pard," he exclaimed, "didn't I talk to ye? Mister Petrie an' Mister Factor MacCaskill ain't Redpath, what can't a-bear to share. Didn't I talk to ye? Didn't I? Gimme some eatin' tobaccer," he demanded, turning to me, considering himself admitted into our society by my partner's concession.

Instead of the desired chew, he received a command to "quit his noise."

Evidently the cowardly half-breed was in great fear of death.

"Mister Petrie," he gasped, "your father never done it! No, sir. Ole man Fagge is planted not so far off. He was knifed, mister, an' I'm the only man who knows who done it, 'cause I saw wi' me own eyes. Yer father was a-standin' close up when 'twas done, but he never done it."

"Who killed Joe Fagge?"

The name of Redpath was shivering on my tongue.

"Olaffson," blurted out the half-breed.

The Icelander again! Always Olaffson! I could have believed that Redpath had told me the truth, and that Olaffson was the originator of all the plots I had attributed to him.

By still playing upon the half-breed's fear of death, we obtained the whole story. My father, Leblanc, and Fagge had passed into this defile, and had reached the Canyon of the North Wind, whose existence was at that time only known to us by the rushing breath below. The old man prowled about by himself, permitting no one to accompany him, as he would not give his secret away lightly, and in the course of his ramblings came across Redpath, whom he hated, and who had incautiously encamped just outside the canyon. Returning in a rage, the half-mad miner swore that he would abandon the expedition, and refused to give the key to the situation, which was the secret of the entrance into

Mosquito Pass, the only way leading out from the canyon to the unknown land of Bonanza beyond. My father had seen the old man preparing a plan to aid his already failing memory, and he had acquainted Redpath with this fact.

One night—it was late in the season, and already some snow had fallen—Olaffson came up to the camp fire, where Fagge was sitting alone. My father was spreading his blanket under the shelter of the rocks; Leblanc, still farther away, was cutting logs for the fire. The Icelander flung himself suddenly upon the old man, stabbed him when he resisted; but before he could escape with the secret my father was upon him, and had knocked him down. Joe Fagge was dead. My father took the plan, which he kept with him the rest of his life; Olaffson picked himself up and went to report to Redpath, who came presently, and accused my father of having murdered the old miner for his own ends. They came to blows; my father had the best of matters there, and, after beating his late friend, went away, taking the secret with him, and Leblanc never saw him again. Redpath was left helpless and when he failed to find the pass had to follow my father south. He only just escaped; had he remained another twenty-four hours, he would certainly have been frozen in and killed by the arctic winter.

Such was the story Leblanc told us, and when he had done, it must be owned that I spared a pitying thought for Redpath, who, according to the

statement we had just heard, had cause to believe my father guilty. But had Olaffson attacked the old miner upon his own initiative, or had Redpath instructed him to obtain that plan at whatever cost?

Leblanc quickly reverted to his own condition.

"Be I a-goin' to die soon, do ye think?" he went on whining. "I feel ter'ble queer-like."

"Speakin' the truth might make ye feel that, I guess," said the factor, and with that we left the men, and made our way back to what had been our camp.

The invisible hand, which had tried to settle Leblanc, had passed there also, making a thorough sweep of our tools and our packs, even down to our one little tin mug, which I remembered having thoughtlessly left in the open.

I had never before seen MacCaskill in a thorough rage. His great body quivered with passion, and he put out his hammer-like fist, which anger caused him to move as though it had been a hammer.

"There's no bit of mercy if we strike him. Golden gates o' Jerusalem! If I get him into me hands, I'll smash him up like a rotten melon."

Akshelah was not one to waste time in threats; indeed, I have noticed that women always reserve their energies to meet a crisis. She was already upon her knees, patting the ground, as though it had been a rich fabric pleasant to the touch. Presently she stood up, and soon was walking, picking up a track which to me was invisible.

"You are wrong," she said, as we followed. "The Iceland-man has a small foot. This is large."

She tracked the footprints to the stream. We crossed by means of the rocks; and when on the opposite side, Akshelah was puzzled.

"I know," she said presently; "he took off his moccasins. See! Here he put down the tools, and rested."

We took her word for this, because not even my trained eyes could pick out the signs she tried to indicate. She took us along, and soon a deep, melodious sound came upon our ears, and the lights ahead shimmered before the shadows stopped them, as the haze shimmers on a hot day. We were near the mouth of the canyon, and soon we saw the narrow black entry, the straight cleft where the rocks lifted up to the clouds, with the torrent of wind booming forth. The air became moist, colder, and there was the smell of vegetation rotting in water.

Just outside, Akshelah stopped to announce that the tracks of the man who had robbed us went "up into the wind."

It was the time of the shadow—the two hours after midnight when the light is perplexing. The canyon was very dark, because the summits almost touched far away overhead, horrifying, and very cold. We lost nerve; we were tired after a long day's journey; we resolved to defer our entry into the north wind until the coming of the perfect day.

AN OLD CAMPAIGNER

I MUST have been dreaming, because I awoke with a cry upon my lips, and I thought I had exclaimed "Father!"

On one side MacCaskill breathed heavily, shifting often, as the ground chafed his bones through the white moss we had collected to lie upon; on the other Akshelah slept, her head upon her two hands, a pretty picture, and yet severe, for she might have been dead, so still was she, and so pale. Her little face was unhappy, and my heart reproached me, because I knew that she was enduring hardships for my sake. She understood more about my own people than I did myself. She thought that when I had found enough gold I should go away and find my own new place, perhaps in the world of that visionary London, where I had first seen the light, and she would see me no more. The unhappiness she would not betray by day Nature brought and left upon her face in sleep. She was young womanhood, I young manhood. If there was any gulf between us, she could not see it. Why should I try to find it?

The voice in which I had called "Father!" was not my own. It was a thin voice, peevish and

frightened. "Take me away," was my thought, before I entirely awoke; "I don't like the wind and the noise." But I was a grown man, abnormally strong, capable of protecting others. I could not understand my dream.

Certainly there was a n[illegible] which was not the work of imagination. I started up, wide awake; a few frogs whistled at the stream below—that was a natural sound. The wind brought a steady, metallic ring—that was not natural. It was the quick stroke of a mining tool upon rock. I rose quietly, and walked to the black mouth of the cany[illegible]n; but a footstep followed, a hand touched me, and a voice spoke.

"Ah, you are going away!"

Akshelah had awoke after me, and had followed jealously.

"Don't you hear that noise?" I whispered.

But the girl had no ears for it. She drew me away.

"See, he is sleeping, and will never know."

"What do you mean, little squirrel?" I said, in the old foolish manner I had spoken to her at home, and she responded to my mood.

"I will find the trail across the Bad Lands. I will bring you down to the green country," she whispered passionately. "We will go back to the Yellow Sands before the winds of Tukwaukin come. Your tepee will be ready. You can be happy there."

"We will go together soon," I said, wanting to make her happy, but not wishing to deceive. "I cannot leave him. It would be cowardly."

"He does not care for you. It is the yellow dirt out of the ground that he loves. When he has plenty of that he will forget you, because when men find the yellow dirt they want no other friend. They do not know that the Bad Spirit makes the yellow dirt, and then hides it away in the ground, and watches. You shall hear him laugh at nights when he sees the men finding it."

The ringing of metal upon the hard rock went on.

I could not conquer the impulse which bade me enter the dark canyon, and Akshelah would never let me out of her sight. The struggle against that wind put confidence into me, and I stepped out beside the cold, dripping wall, as sure of my way as though I had been walking from Yellow Sands up to my homestead. The ascent was very gradual.

Presently the loose rocks turned to shingle, hard to walk upon, but any noise we made in advancing was carried down by the wind.

"Take care!" I cried warningly. "The wall juts out here."

I could see nothing, and yet I had spoken the truth. At the right moment I put out my hand and met the wet wall, and we went round, never making a mistake.

"Presently there will be a break," I went on. "Right ahead is a bluff of spruce. It is always

dark there, and damp, and full of mosquitos. Above us we shall find a shelf of rock which is protected from the wind. Once there was a camp here."

"Your father has been with you," said Akshelah fearfully, through the cold current. "He made signs to you to come. We must not disobey those who live with the Great Spirit. Your father will be pleased with me for coming with you."

"Here!" I exclaimed, bending and feeling, but this time I was wrong; the clammy, inaccessible wall met my hands. The ringing of the mining pick had stopped.

We went on a few more paces, through gloom that brushed the face like cobwebs, and again I felt. I was right.

The straight wall broke, and there was a passage upward over the rocks.

We went up, with the speed and silence of forest cats, until we came out of the wind, and a screen of bushes stopped us. No sound came from the ledge, which I knew went back and into the cliff on the other side of those bushes.

"There is a way round higher up," I said, remembering.

But Akshelah caught and held me tightly.

"Do not move," she whispered. "A man is coming up."

Directly she had spoken I heard, and knew we could not get away. This was the man who had

been working upon the rocks, and he would be carrying a pick, with which he could kill either of us at a blow.

My blood rose excitedly, and I determined that I would use Olaffson as he had wished to use me.

Drawing Akshelah back, I crawled upon a higher rock, while the man ascended slowly, as though short of breath, until I felt he was just upon me. Then I leant down, threw my arms out, and sprang forward. I had him fair; but he was a large man, and his clothes smelt abominably. His pick rattled upon the rocks as we fell together, crashing among the bushes.

My captive spoke gaspingly, but not in fear, nor yet in anger; but rather as a gambler who has played his one high card, and finds it no good:

"I'm afraid you have me, Hanafin."

So soon as he had spoken he was a free man again. The voice was the voice of Redpath.

He picked himself up at once, and struck a match—probably one of ours he had lately stolen—and the spluttering light fell upon the loose, sick-looking face and the black, straight rocks behind him, where slime glistened, and water dropped like spots of tar.

"Ah, it is you, Petrie!" he said, with unmistakable relief. "Come inside."

My strength departed from me.

"I thought you were dead," I said feebly.

"Well, I suppose I ought to be," said the ad-

venturer, rather wearily. "I have been through terrestrial purgatories to retain life alight. I hardly know why. Come in," he continued quite heartily. "You remembered the way. I wondered whether you would."

I hesitated, and he went on:

"You know your strength, and you know my lack of it. I lost my pretty little shooter in the quagmire. I'm sorry I haven't much to offer you, especially as it happens to be my birthday. I am sixty-seven to-day, my boy. By Gad! how the years do run!"

In spite of his friendly manner, I took care to keep myself between him and Akshelah.

"How do I know this place?" I asked my enemy. "I have come along without making a mistake, and I seem to have seen it all before."

"You were here with your father. You were a very young child, and I remember you were terribly in the way," said Redpath.

Strange that the truth had never occurred to me! So I had already seen more than a fair share of life. From London to outside Canada; from civilisation to the unknown lands; in scenes of fighting and madness; in gold-hunting, and murder, and flight. Truly an adventurous childhood!

When we had come upon the ledge and were out of the wind, Redpath lit a small lantern, which a few hours before had been MacCaskill's property, and liberally offered us deer-pemmican, which he

had stolen from our camp The light glinted upon our unused tools lying at the back of the cave. Yet I could never have summoned the courage to accuse this calm gentleman.

"It is expedient for me to keep the light out of the canyon," our host said carelessly. "Did Hanafin express any intention, that you remember, of tracking me?"

"He thought you could not escape from the mud," I replied.

Redpath was sitting in darkness, and I could make out his outline, without being able to see his face. He changed the subject at once, and said, letting each syllable escape coldly:

"You will understand that in my dealings with you I have played my game according to my rules. I have generally found that where you cannot trust the father, neither can you trust the son. It was not many yards from this spot that your father chose to break the agreement between us."

Then I spoke up and told him of the confession of Leblanc.

"It is a lie," he said casually. "Don't believe me unless you wish to; but Olaffson was with me while the deed was taking place. He never saw the end of Fagge, neither did I. Your father never denied the deed. Even now I do not say he struck with the intention of killing. The madman may actually have attacked him in the first place. It was Leblanc who called us, and I distinctly saw

your father kneeling over the body, his blood-stained knife by his hand."

"Why should Leblanc put it on to Olaffson?"

"The two men have always hated each other. I believe that Olaffson has quite recently made an attempt to silence the half-breed."

"Why didn't you prevent him?" I said boldly.

"I have no control over Olaffson." The adventurer was smiling, I was sure. "He is physically far stronger than I am, and probably would kill me were he not such a coward, and were I not sometimes useful to him. Besides, why should I interfere? I should like the man out of the way."

So far Akshelah had not spoken, though she was always looking towards Redpath, but now she said calmly:

"You want us far away."

"You are quite correct," said Redpath, with condescension.

"You have been to our tepee," went on the girl. "You have taken our food and our tools."

"Again correct," said Redpath pleasantly. "My dear Petrie, the young lady does not, of course, understand the first principles of civilised warfare. I saw my opportunity for annexing your property, and I should have been a decidedly bad tactician had I neglected to take it."

Akshelah had arisen. She collected together everything she could find in the cave, not only our own property, but the few little things belonging to

Redpath, leaving only the small lamp smouldering in the centre of the rock floor. She arranged these things between us into two packs, the smaller for me to carry, the larger for herself.

"A clever girl," said Redpath reflectively. "She is right. You have the upper hand, and you must take your advantage of the circumstance. Two small things I will plead for—the handkerchief and the old cashmere scarf. The possession of a handkerchief in these parts stamps one with the mark of the gentleman. The scarf once belonged to my mother, and is interesting as a reminiscence."

"Put everything back that does not belong to us," I ordered.

"No," said Akshelah.

I reiterated my command almost angrily, and the girl obeyed, Redpath thanking me after his own manner.

"It is a mistake to return more than I asked for."

I proposed going, lest MacCaskill should be hunting for us, but Redpath, to my surprise, requested me to favour him with a complete account of our doings since he had made his terrible plunge off the *Carillon*. After I had done so, he said softly:

"As usual, I failed to seize my opportunity. You wondered why I did not shoot you all down while we were waiting on deck for the smash?"

"The *Firefly* was coming up," I suggested.

"I knew nothing of it until near the end, as my attention was given to other things," he said. "To

shoot down unarmed men, in a state of cold blood, requires an immense amount of nerve. I had not sufficient. That is the reason I failed. Then, when I had strung myself almost up to the desired pitch, I saw my pursuer, and knew I was too late.

"I asked the inspector why he wanted you, but he would not say," I added, not without curiosity.

"Hanafin is a clever fellow, far too good for police work. He failed in the Indian Civil, I believe, and ultimately drifted out here, where he had the sense to keep sober. As an excellent illustration of my ill-luck, I may say that he is after me for unintentional homicide." His dark shadow leaned forward to touch up the dim light of the lantern. "Everything had failed with me, and I turned to smuggling liquor across the boundary into a prohibition country. I was bound to fail again, as the police were very active; but I thought I might do well for a time, and slip away quietly when affairs should reach a crisis. One wet night, the load of hay which contained my barrels of smuggled spirit was surrounded unexpectedly, and I was forced to shoot, with no intention of injuring, but merely to make an opening for my escape. At my age a long term in the penitentiary is equivalent to a sentence of death. Bad fortune, not my aim, steered the lead into the stomach of a trooper. I got away, assumed the disguise of a priest, which I had successfully used before, and always carried to meet an emergency, and escaped into the wilds. Chance led me to the

end of a search I had been making for years. I arrived just too late to find your father alive."

There was a silent interval, awkward for me, but presently I said:

"What are you going to do now?"

"I do not propose showing you my hand," said the adventurer curtly. "I have too many enemies on the other side of the coulee, without reckoning the two sailors, with Olaffson here after the gold, and Hanafin and his hounds after me."

"I don't wish t· be your enemy," I said, wondering whether I spoke the truth.

"Possibly, if you were alone, I might admit you to a small claim, though I should not permit you to go from here until I was satisfied," went on Redpath. "Admit such men as MacCaskill, as Leblanc, and, before the fall, all the scum of the world would be swarming and sweating up this canyon, and I should have to rest content with a possibly dried-up claim. Here I have been puzzling my brains how to preserve the secret from Olaffson."

If this were truth, his selfishness was something beyond belief.

"And all for nothing, after all," he added coldly.

I asked him what he meant, and he said:

"Mosquito Pass has disappeared."

I stared through the gloom towards the big, indistinct shape, which went on speaking:

"I have gone by Fagge's plan. I have found the

exact spot he there indicates, but the pass itself has vanished. I have worked ineffectually at the place where the opening ought to appear. There is no way round out of the canyon. Nothing short of a balloon could help us over the straight wall of rock that runs up to the sky."

Again I did not believe him, but when I began to speak, his manner changed.

"You have been here long enough," he said unpleasantly. "I have had no rest for hours."

Akshelah was still undismayed. She picked up MacCaskill's little lantern, extinguished its light, and added it to her pack without a word, but with a glance of contempt cast at the adventurer, sitting silent and cold in the gloom. Then together we went down again into the north wind.

WHILE we ate our breakfast of bacon and biscuits a few ravens hovered, as though surprised to see us, and their hoarse croaking mingled dismally with the subdued roar of the wind from the great blow-pipe. Some chick-adees hopped about the grass and examined us fearlessly. The defile was filled with gossamers. A golden haze made it difficult to see any distance along the coulee, and out of this haze two figures loomed. Presently we discovered the rascally sailors.

"Didn't I tell ye to keep away?" shouted MacCaskill.

"Captain," called Jim Morrison, "them soldiers are a-comin'! I saw 'em on the flats, an' Gedeon seen 'em too."

"They're a-comin for to take us," began Leblanc, who was himself again; but MacCaskill began to growl.

"How many of 'em?" he demanded.

"All three, major," answered Morrison, trying to wheedle himself towards our supplies.

"You two durned fellers have give us away!"

"We never did, colonel. Gospel! We never did. We wouldn't want er—"

"Shut your stoke-hole. Make your own tracks!"

After which the factor addressed me.

"Let's get, Rupe. If that Hanafin finds us, we'll have the whole world buzzin' around next week."

We made a cache of our supplies, and tracked for the canyon. I had allowed MacCaskill to believe that Olaffson had been the thief of the previous day, and had instructed Akshelah not to speak of our visit to Redpath. Because I was myself young and strong, I pitied the old adventurer who had made such a complete failure of his life. I wanted the others to believe him dead.

We tracked along the canyon, through the semi-darkness and the moist wind, until we reached the spruce. The trees were skeletons, ragged and uncouth, and the logs very small. The hot air shrieked and crept with insects. I had never known mosquitos so large or so virulent, and they choked and blinded us with their millions. Akshelah wrapped up her head; MacCaskill cursed; my own tanned skin pricked in a thousand places. Suddenly we stumbled over a pile of stones.

Large water-worn pebbles, with pieces of rock as white as milk, had been heaped into a long mound. At one end faintly appeared a design, formed simply by a spruce divided some four feet above ground, with a smaller and shorter piece of the same tree tied by some rotten rope across.

"A grave," said the factor, his voice barely audible through the mosquitos.

There was no need to say more, because we knew what lay buried there. We came out of the spruce, and over shingle, between the colossal walls, rounded a spur of rock, which jutted out like a horn, and were confronted by a wet precipice, honeycombed by small holes, each of which whistled and hissed as it discharged a separate volume of wind. Overhead we could just make out a fringe of spruce, like far-away storm-clouds.

"Wings for three," said MacCaskill morosely.

"Can't we find any way round?"

"Likely," growled MacCaskill. "P'r'aps we'd best start right now, around by Alaska, and down the Yukon to the Porcupine, and out to M'Pherson. Then come along the MacKenzie, till we strike the Slave and the Athabasca. Do it in a year, if we have luck."

"Where's Mosquito Pass?" I said, mindful of what Redpath had told me.

"Where? Right here, I guess."

"Then where's the hole?"

"Ask a prophet."

I examined the face of the cliff, which was largely composed of streaked granite; near the ground moss grew to a depth of more than a foot, and a few small trees, very short and bushy, sprang out in clumps. I forced myself into one of the narrow inlets, where there was a strong odour of decayed matter, but I

saw no signs of away out, and the mosquitos covered my face. When I forced myself out, one of the small trees caught me. It must have been very lightly rooted, for when I pulled it came away from its crevice.

"We'll be bit to the bone if we do strike the hole," said MacCaskill, who was in the mood to grumble. "See them wind-pipes! If ye got inter one, ye might fancy yourself a durned shell inside a gun. Golden Jerusalem!" His face altered wonderfully, and his eyes began to stare. "Don't drop it! You're wastin' it, ye fool! Look-a-here! Coarse, coarse as yaller sugar!"

When he gripped at the roots of the little tree I was still holding, I began to understand.

Golden grains gleamed about the brown dirt still adhering to the roots. The factor shook this dirt away, but there was no water handy to wash out the handful.

"There's two dollars here, I guess," he chuckled, while before my eyes was the vision of my father flinging the buckskin bag of stones and dirt into the Yellow Sands, and in my ears came his sad voice giving me my first and only lesson.

MacCaskill put the dirt into his hat, and scrambled about the precipice with the agility of a chipmunk.

"We must find that hole, Rupe!" he shouted through the hot wind. "And when we're through, we'll want to close the pass up, so as no one'll be

able to follow. See? Golden gates! Come over here and help look, you gal. You ain't mope-eyed."

Akshelah's wonderful eyes looked back, and she called to me quietly. She directed my glance, and immediately I discovered Inspector Hanafin leaning against the spur of rock, watching us, and smoking his pipe.

He stirred when he caught my eye, and came towards us, his bright colours rather dingy after his rapid crossing of the Bad Lands.

"Hard at it, eh?" he said, in his delightful voice, while MacCaskill started round violently.

"I thought you had gone away on the *Firefly*," I said, and MacCaskill growled.

"The *Firefly* hasn't gone away," said Hanafin. "Do you know that this is unexplored territory?" he went on, examining the contents of MacCaskill's hat, and stirring the dirt lightly with a long finger.

My partner was sulky at having his plans spoilt, and admitted as much in his most morose fashion. But Hanafin laughed.

"You haven't come here after Redpath," complained MacCaskill. "You just came followin' us."

"I belong to the Force," interrupted Hanafin, stroking the yellow stripe down his leg. "If I think you have made a discovery of gold, it is my duty to follow you. Now, you had better tell me what you know."

"You'll report it, and we'll have half the world here."

The inspector twirled a ring upon his third finger.

"You ought to be old enough to know that you can't keep a gold-find private property. Let us suppose that you and Petrie strike something rich to-day. This is unexplored territory, and you are alone. Next week you would have seen fifty men here, the following week one hundred, the next a thousand, and next month a city. We don't need wires to telegraph such news as a gold-find. As a matter of fact, it's lucky for you that I have come, because I can establish you as legal miners. Are you going to tell me what you know?"

"I hate to do it," muttered MacCaskill.

The inspector pulled out a note-book and made some entries. The bed of shingle on which we were standing lay outside the channel of wind. The heat, however, was terrible, and the mosquitos thick as dust. Hanafin turned abruptly.

"Heard anything of Redpath?"

I felt his eyes upon me, while I tried to think out a reply in my slow-witted fashion; but the next moment I heard his cheerful laugh.

"So he has got here," said the soldier. Again he bent his head, but as he was writing, observed: "I'm ready to listen, MacCaskill."

My partner still demurred.

"You three here; Redpath and his Icelander; the two sailors; my two boys and myself. Add them up. Ten already for the new mining camp.

Lennie and company on their way. We shall soon be crowded."

MacCaskill gasped.

"All that crowd comin'?"

"Of course," said the inspector. "When we were camping in the electric hollow any half-blind fool could have seen that you knew of something. It wasn't hard to understand that those two sailors were on the good thing, too, for they were hanging about you men like shadows. I didn't talk. Lennie and his lot didn't talk, but anyone could have told that they had made up their minds to desert the *Carillon* and follow you inside. By morning you had gone, following the tracks of Redpath and his blackguard; the two sailors had gone, following your tracks; I came, following their tracks; Lennie and Co. are following the tracks of all of us. That's how a mining camp grows, my friend."

"I pass," said MacCaskill unhappily, and he told the inspector all the story.

"Good," said the handsome Englishman, when he had done. He looked about, stroking his brown moustache, and went on: "This might be made a regular death-trap for us. Don't you see?" He was addressing me. "One man hidden in that spruce could pick us off as he liked. We can only advance. Rock behind; the canyon upon either side. What a place to drive an enemy into!"

"Redpath has lost his shooter!" I exclaimed heedlessly. "It fell off him in the mud."

"That is the information I wanted," said Hanafin. "Don't be alarmed," he added to MacCaskill. "Norman is posted upon the far side of the spruce; Carey, my other boy, at the entrance into the canyon." He gave a last pull at his pipe. "Now to find the pass."

Akshelah had been standing beside me very quietly. Now she broke silence for the first time.

"Is it the Mosquito Hole?" she said composedly.

We all turned to her.

"There," she said, pointing away to the far left side, where there was no moss and no small trees, but merely rugged rock.

"Well, you see more than I can, my girl," said Hanafin.

We came across the shingle and a bed of sand to where there was thick wet moss. Under the cliff, streaked with its red and yellow rivulets of slime, we looked up from ledge to ledge, and from point to point. There was not the smallest indication of any hole.

MacCaskill began to growl again, and Hanafin was puzzled, but Akshelah looked at me and laughed.

"You see?" she said, making the slightest upward movement of her head.

I did not see, and I was about to confess as much, when the sound of a million insect trumpets reached my ears. Then I perceived a great boulder

coming from the face of the cliff, like a misshapen nose, and to that I pointed with the cry of discovery. The other two remained as much in the dark as ever.

"Watch the mosquitos!" I called.

The insects were streaming steadily over the summit of the boulder, like smoke out of a stove-pipe.

"You're a world-beater, girl!" exclaimed Inspector Hanafin.

The others helped me to ascend the almost perpendicular cliff, where it was very hard to find and secure a safe footing. However, I was doing something that I understood, and I soon attained the big boulder, which did not project as a part of the cliff, but merely reposed as a separate fragment within a cavity. It might have been lowered there to cover and conceal the entrance to the hole. I shouted down this information to my companions.

"See!" said the inspector, pointing over me. "That rock broke off, and fell exactly upon the hole, which caught it as a cup would catch a ball."

I put my head back, and saw that he had hit on the truth. The scar made by the separation was obvious some way above. Behind the great fragment opened an aperture into which I might have inserted my head. Here the villainous mosquitos were pouring in and out.

"Could we work a lever?" called Hanafin.

It was impossible, because the force would have

to be exerted against the opposite side, and there was no foothold there.

"Use your muscles, Rupe!" called MacCaskill.

He spoke half in jest, but I took the remark in earnest. Having secured safe foothold, I dug my hands into the crevices of the rock, and bent back with all my might. A movement followed, a sullen, shifting motion, and a wave of heat passed through me. Then the effort died out, the rock settled back grimly, and the air became solid with mosquitos.

"That boy could lift an ox!" I overheard Hanafin muttering.

MacCaskill was excited again.

"Stay with it, Rupe! Don't be beat! He's a bigger than Jake Peterssen, but he won't scrap back!"

I was excited, too. I became far more anxious to shift the great rock than to enter the land of Bonanza. By that time I had learnt sufficient to be proud of my strength, because I understood that it was abnormal. I pulled off my coat, strapped my waist tighter, worked my feet into the ledge, dug my hands into the unyielding surface, and bent over the black monster, which was quite as black as the negro I had conquered at Gull, though far less terrible. I strained, until the surrounding atmosphere became dark, and something screamed into my ears.

There was again a motion, but whether the rock was coming to me or I moving to the rock, I did

not know. Though I saw nothing, I became in some way aware that my muscles stood out themselves like projections of rock, and I felt that the sight was unnatural. Then the monster appeared to rise out of his bed and come upon me, with a rending and a tearing, threatening to crush me. Something was giving and parting. Was it from the roots of the boulder, or from my own vitals? I felt nothing whatever, no pain, not even an ordinary strain.

I understood the cause. Of course, it was because I had released my grip, and the great rock had conquered me. It would be impossible to try again, because my limbs were quivering, and there was no more strength left in my body than in that of an infant.

A ray of red light flashed out of the far-away darkness, and I understood that I had fallen to one side, in order that I might escape some terrible creature, which was crashing upon me to crush out my life. An avalanche swept past with a cold breath, and I began to fall, quite easily and contentedly, until something which I took to be a cloud received and held me, and floated away lightly, still holding me, and rocking gently up and down.

HOW JUSTICE WORKS

VARIED were the sounds that reached my ears when I woke in the green coulee, to find my limbs limp and my head dizzy. I heard, above the hissing of the canyon, the stroke of a pick, the scrape of a spade, the blow of axe and hammer, and the snarl of a saw. I was lying upon a blanket, with Akshelah kneeling on the moss beside me, fanning away the insects. She smiled delightedly when I looked round, and commanded me not to move.

The two troopers were cutting and shaping logs of spruce. MacCaskill was digging foundations. On the other side, the idle Leblanc and the incorrigible Morrison were playing poker.

"Three queens is good, Jimmy," I heard the former saying. "That's fourteen dollars you've lifted, durn ye! Ye can have it, soon as I wash out me first pay-dirt."

"Gimme a voucher," demanded Jim Morrison.

Then Inspector Hanafin came down from the rocks, carrying a great load of white grass for thatching, his fur-lined cloak, his gaudy coat and sword put aside, the rings stripped from his fingers, his sleeves rolled up, his handsome face marked with dirt.

"Good man!" he exclaimed, when he saw me lift myself, and down he set his bundle. "Overstrain, but nothing damaged," he said cheerily. "You'll be all right to-morrow."

MacCaskill heard his voice, and came tramping across.

"You're the stuff, Rupe!" he called, in splendid spirits. "I'm makin' our shanty. See?"

"Did I open the hole?" I asked eagerly, and both the men laughed.

"You and that rock come down together," said MacCaskill.

"You pulled yourself round just in time, and I was able to catch you as you fell," went on Hanafin. "The hole's open; but we didn't venture inside, because the place was solid with mosquitos, and the tunnel was as black as tar. We started a smudge with dry grass and damp moss on the inside, and the pass may be fairly clear by morning. Ever seen a mining town start?"

Before I could reply, he saw the two sailors, and his anger came out.

"You idle hounds!" he exclaimed, and going up, deliberately kicked each man. "Put up those cards, and set down to work, or I'll pass you out of this camp before morning."

The worthless creatures cringed, and swore, and rose reluctantly.

"Norman!" called the inspector, "give these men some work, and if they don't stay with it

report 'em, and I'll prescribe something for their health. We're not going to have a bad crowd here our first week," he added threateningly, and then turned back to me to add: "A mining town begins, continues, and ends in gambling."

MacCaskill was chuckling as he made mighty strokes with his spade.

"Say, Rupe, you and me'll be Bonanza kings in a year, maybe," he said. "We'll be havin' our pictures stuck inter papers."

He burst into laughter.

"You old fool," said Hanafin; but the infection reached him. "My ambition is to get married, and there's little chance of that on my pay."

He passed on at once, with his load of dry grass, as though ashamed of the confession, and I understood what it was that inspired the Englishman. Somebody with bright eyes was waiting for him at home! The chance of his life had come, and he was not the one to miss it. I wondered if she would care for him as Akshelah liked to care for me.

Working hours were long, because there was no darkness to trouble us, and the soldiers made great progress with their building, while Akshelah did the cooking, and the two sailors the growling. The latter had come in with the idea of picking up gold, not of working for other people; but as they had no supplies, they had to make their choice between working or starving.

Our camp fire burnt redly in the defile during

the time of the shadow, which began half an hour after midnight and lasted until sunrise, two hours later. When we had done eating, the troopers sang us songs of the plains and told us yarns of the prairie; and later on, Hanafin spoke to me of great London, and listened sympathetically to my story, and the tragedy connected with my father. By that time MacCaskill, Norman, and the two sailors were asleep; but Akshelah sat opposite, her fine eyes glowing in the firelight. Outside the light of the fire, Carey, the tall trooper, did patrol duty. My heart went out to Hanafin, as he talked to me as an equal, and treated me as such. Hanafin and Redpath were the two English gentlemen of my acquaintance, and my father was the only other I had known.

"I have an idea that I can name the man who killed the discoverer of this place," said the inspector musingly, but he would say no more. "What do I think of Redpath? An old and slimy villain, who has reached bed-rock, and who will now stick at nothing, because he has no lower to fall. Don't pity him, my boy. His smooth tongue and his oily manner are his two strongest weapons. I suppose he is sitting up in his cave now, rehearsing the details of some new plot with that infernal Icelander." He paused, then added: "My duty is divided. I ought to arrest Redpath, and deliver him at Regina, and I must administer the law here, if our discovery is what we believe it to be."

A figure loomed large into the firelight, and Carey saluted.

"A stranger coming up, sir. Maybe a native. Made no reply to my challenge."

"Go out and bring him in."

The disciplined trooper wheeled round and was gone.

Presently he accompanied a very old man, bent and wrapped in an aged blanket, presenting a weird sight in the glow of the fire. His face was like a piece of cracked leather, but his teeth, when he grinned in greeting, were white and sound.

"Ho!" he exclaimed, "white great boy!"

"Ho!" replied Hanafin. "You speak English, do you?"

It was difficult to extract any meaning out of the jargon of mangled words and distorted sentences which the ancient proceeded to deliver. He sought to tell us the history of himself, and of his fathers, of their long struggles with the extinct Iroquois; but when Hanafin questioned him concerning the adjacent country, the old man became mysterious. He knew nothing of the land of Bonanza, nor had he ever heard of Mosquito Pass. His innocence was wonderful; his lying palpable! He demanded "tobak" as a solace for his old age; and when this was given him he became bold, a wild longing crossed his aged face, and he prayed for "the water that burns a man inside."

"Carey!" exclaimed Hanafin, fingering the fur

on his cloak, "you are sure this is unexplored territory?"

"Yes, sir. It is so marked on all our maps."

The inspector coughed.

"That civilising agent whisky has evidently preceded us."

"He may have been inside, sir," suggested the trooper.

Hanafin put the question in many different ways and dialects; but from the answers given, he was satisfied that the old native had never been inside—that is, to civilisation.

"I could almost swear that he came out of the canyon, sir," said Carey.

I caught Hanafin's arm, and said unguardedly:

"He comes from Redpath!"

The inspector never glanced at me, but said quietly:

"Thank you for an idea, Petrie."

He leaned towards the ancient, and in his clear, strong voice pronounced the following names: "Petrie! Redpath! Leblanc! Joe Fagge! Olaffson!"

"You hit him every time, sir!" exclaimed Carey, forgetting himself in his admiration.

"So it was Redpath who gave you whisky years ago! I might have guessed it," said Hanafin.

MacCaskill was snoring behind me, and beyond Norman slept quietly in his blanket. They had not been disturbed by the arrival of the native. Two dark shapes heaved close to the rocks, themselves

like rocks. These shapes represented Leblanc and Morrison. I saw Hanafin's eyes fixed that way.

He went on with his examination of the ancient. Did he know anything concerning the death of the old half-mad miner? Did he know who killed him? Had he been present at the time? What talk had he heard? The weird creature poured forth a flood of negatives, without waiting to listen to any particular question, and quite obviously without taking in any part of its meaning.

"I'll use this old parrot as a test," said Hanafin grimly. "Carey!"

The trooper stiffened at once.

"Take a light. Lead this old man up to the half-breed yonder. Make him kneel down and look at the sleeper."

Hanafin, I fancy, shivered at his own plan, but the night was cold.

"Hold the light just above the old man's head. We will see if the half-breed recognises him."

A thrill passed through me. Over the great cliffs a faint aurora burnt blue. MacCaskill snored on; Norman never stirred; the two shapes remained like the rocks behind them. During the silence I heard the hoarse croak of the ravens I had seen that morning. They were returning to the defile.

The fire darted up hotly, and a red shower of sparks went aloft and vanished. Carey's face looked like bronze as he drew a flaming brand from the fire. He gripped the ancient with his free hand, and

pulled him along. Hanafin in his long black cloak went on the other side. Akshelah and I followed. It was like a funeral procession.

We reached the side of the sleepers. A magnetic storm breaking overhead would scarcely have aroused them. Carey forced the shivering Indian upon his knees, close to the left shoulder of Leblanc; standing behind, he held the flaring spruce so that the light fell full upon the pinched and withered face, weird in age and horrid with fear, while the holder of the light remained himself invisible. Hanafin passed round to the half-breed's right shoulder, and stood between the sleepers.

The light moved this way and that, as the hand of him that held it shook, and my own breath began to quicken. Hanafin seized Leblanc and shook him violently. At the same time, his strong voice pealed out among the cliffs:

"Who was it killed Joe Fagge?"

A scream of awful terror met the startled echoes of that question.

Leblanc had opened his eyes to see a blaze of light, and below the wizened face and blood-shot eyes of the silent witness—the ghost-like witness of the deed done twenty years before. The thin lips before him never stirred while that question rang into his awakened ears. Leblanc was little better than a beast, and a beast goes mad easily.

Jim Morrison awoke shouting, in time to see his associate leaping away over the rocks like a

huge monkey, making the country horrible with yells.

Carey dropped his hand, and the sparks again leapt aloft.

The other two sleepers awoke, and called out.

"Guilty," said Hanafin, in answer to their question.

We saw the poor wretch disappear into the canyon.

Carey and Norman followed a little way, but they soon lost sight of what had lately been Leblanc, the murderer of half-mad Joe Fagge, and now, by the working of Justice, a madman himself. They did not go up to the hot insect-filled cemetery among the spruce.

The strong light began to break, making the cold patches of quartz like snow, and under the heaving clouds the gossamers lifted and flickered. The ravens were croaking in the direction of Eldorado. Mosquito Hole lay that way.

Hanafin turned the ancient Indian out of the camp, and Norman accompanied the unhappy creature some distance along the defile.

I thought the inspector severe upon that occasion; but he knew his duty, and I knew nothing. Akshelah declared that the departed was a bad man, and I expect she was right.

Though I had very little sleep, I felt my strength again when the sun became strong and hot.

We were a silent party at breakfast—Hanafin grave, MacCaskill subdued, and Morrison blenching.

After eating, we took up our tools and prepared to start for the unknown land of treasure.

"Anything to report, Norman?" asked the inspector, as he rolled a cigarette.

"Nothing, sir."

But we found the half-breed at Mosquito Hole, or rather that which the insects had done with and left for a husk. He must have scrambled up to the hole, certain that his pursuers were upon him, and had slipped while descending, and fallen, bruising his head. There the enemy would have been upon him before he could recover—a relentless, poisonous enemy, in numbers only to be estimated by millions, trumpeting, stabbing, stifling. Its sightless eyes were filled; the host swarmed in and out of its mouth, its nose and ears; yet an unimportant fraction only of that mighty host of mosquitos which had overwhelmed this big, strong man, and had smothered him to his death.

My father was innocent.

Old man Fagge, the crazy miner, the discoverer of Bonanza, had been avenged at last by Justice and Inspector Hanafin.

"Bury it among the spruce," ordered the representative, and his men averted their heads and carried it away.

V

HANAFIN CITY

BONANZA

BEFORE making our entry into Mosquito Pass, which was a passage through the cliff, worn probably by water in prehistoric times, we tried to fan a volume of smoke ahead of us, but the effort was useless, as the strong wind poured it back into our faces. Lowering ourselves to bed-rock, we began the advance, the glow from our lanterns falling upon the saltpetre that coated the rocks, and lighting the mazy clouds of insects that were always busy about our faces. The sides of the tunnel, which was some forty feet in length, were smooth and very wet; a few stalactites pointed from the unseen roof; bunches of moss and some pink fungus spread over the stones; around our feet were numbers of big-eyed frogs, bloated and too indifferent to move. The passage curved sharply at the finish, and we were short of breath by the time we saw the light.

The inspector, my partner, Akshelah, and myself stepped out into the sunlight which poured over the seamed rocks. The troopers and Morrison had been left behind to keep guard and to work. The blue sky ahead floated in vapour, but the tunnel

brought out among a wilderness of huge rocks, so that we could see nothing of the unknown land.

"Frightful hole!" said Hanafin, looking back. "Anyhow, a big smudge this end will clean out the mosquitos, because the wind will carry the smoke through from end to end."

"Where in Jerusalem does the wind come from?" said the factor.

The precipice leaned over slightly, as it towered away some hundreds of feet above us.

"This wall is the wind-break of the country," said the inspector. "All the currents from the north concentrate here, and are forced through the vent-holes, to make a single volume in the canyon."

We climbed upward for another hundred yards, and then entered a channel, about three-eighths of a mile long, with a circular dip in the centre. From the dip we descended, the channel curving every few yards.

"Columnar basalt," Hanafin observed, indicating the perpendicular sides. "The dark grain is magnetic iron. Here we have hornblende. When I have found mercury I shall be content."

"Platinum?" queried MacCaskill, whose knowledge of mining was equal to mine.

"Platinum and gold lie together," said Hanafin.

Then the channel made its last curve. Below us, unpromising and bare, and pent in on all sides by chains of strong mountains, spread out—

Bonanza!

I noticed a stronger flush upon Hanafin's face. He was thinking of that somebody at home! The muscles down my partner's neck swelled out. Two of our small party were excited; two were not. I thought I had never looked upon a more desolate tract of country.

Away to the south-west went a narrow lake of a dirty-grey colour. A stream flowed into this lake, and had shoaled a large part of it near its mouth. Before us a dreary succession of rounded hills rose and fell, all of the same height, shape, and appearance, very thinly covered with scraggy spruce and a little black poplar, with some white birch and pitch-pine. In a very few spots we found a couple of inches of loam under the moss, the sub-soil being invariably gravel, but the surface was more usually composed of rock, with sand intervening.

A wide river cut its curving channel between the dreary hills and its own flats of beach. We could see that this river was very shallow, because long bars of gravel or silt lifted along mid-stream, and the "ripple" betrayed other spots where the wash had just sufficient depth to pass. The stream was reddish in places, probably owing to a rock bottom of granite, where the gravel had been washed away.

"Bad for boats," said MacCaskill.

"Chiefly gravel," said Hanafin. "Sand-bars shift, and gravel doesn't. What would you call the temperature of that water?"

MacCaskill looked puzzled. It was a warm day, well over seventy in the shade. He hazarded:

"Sixty-four."

"I'll say fifty-three," said Hanafin; and when he came to take the temperature with a little spirit thermometer, he found he was only one degree out.

Not a bird was to be sighted, not even a creeping thing upon the ground. It was a land of silence, and desolation, and hidden treasure.

Hanafin pointed out a clear-cut channel, which ran back from the river between the hills, curving south-easterly, and meeting a similar channel, which branched off sharply, and ran back, bending out of sight.

"Will you name the creek to the left?" he said, looking at me; then, seeing my puzzled expression, he added: "Will you give your name to it?"

I suggested that he should have it, but Hanafin replied:

"No. I am more ambitious."

"Petrie Creek!" exclaimed MacCaskill. "I'll have the other creek and valley. Golden gates! MacCaskill Gulch! What?"

"Am I to have nothing?" said Akshelah.

"You shall have the river, my girl," said Hanafin kindly.

The features of the landscape began to stand out as we crossed the hills.

"MacCaskill is a great creek," said Hanafin, with

a trace of excitement; and the old man between us grinned foolishly in the delight of having his name recorded geographically.

"I don't know the first thing 'bout minin'," he admitted. "I guess I can wash out dirt, but any galoot can do that. What's that you've picked up?"

"Galena," said the inspector. "Lead ore." He began to punish it with his little hammer, and indicated a tiny white seam with the word, "Silver."

MacCaskill snatched at it.

"Let's feel. How much is it worth?"

"Possibly two-thirds of one cent," said Hanafin drily, and the factor flung away the lump in disgust.

While we were walking towards the Akshelah, Hanafin began to reply at length to one of MacCaskill's questions.

"How to prospect, eh? Well, we have a theory that the deposits of gold are stored in certain unknown places, and are distributed about the main bed of a river by means of the creeks or gulches. When we have selected a creek, we look for the spot where it bends or slants under the side of the rock, because, if there is gold to be found in that particular creek, we shall find it there, though it does not by any means follow that the bend will prove to be the richest spot in the valley. We prospect at the angle merely to ascertain whether there is any gold in the creek or not. The next thing to do is

to strike a hole to bed-rock, and that's where the work begins. It is best done in the winter, when the water is frozen."

Hanafin broke off, and looked straight ahead with anger upon his face.

We were close to the river, near a shallow part where a bar of gravel made a bridge across three-fourths of the stream. Hanafin turned to Akshelah.

"Do you see those stakes, my girl? There!"

"Yes," said Akshelah, and when she spoke I saw them, too.

"They mean that we are not the first here. Some miner has been before us, and has staked out the claim below the forks."

"Then we'll get to work, and pull up his posts," suggested MacCaskill.

"So there is at least one experienced miner already in Bonanza," began Hanafin.

"And his name is Redpath," I added.

"What an indomitable man!" exclaimed Hanafin. "Directly Petrie had opened the hole, he must have fought his passage through the mosquitos, and here he is, washing out for all he's worth."

"There are no men," said Akshelah.

"Not likely. Directly they saw us come out of the channel they would have escaped into their holes," said Hanafin. "Well, let's make a raft."

We cut down the three largest spruce trees we could find, lopped them, and dragged the logs thus made across the bar to the water. While I cut the notches

in these logs, the others went for the smaller trees, and when we had sufficient, our raft was quickly afloat and across the narrow channel, which was nowhere more than four feet in depth, MacCaskill pushing with a white birch pole on one side and I upon the other. We went up to the side of the hill and down to where the creeks forked, until we reached the claim which had just been opened.

"Two men!" cried Akshelah, pointing out the tracks.

Hanafin measured the distance with his eye, saying:

"A gulch claim is two hundred and fifty feet from post to post. Redpath is no amateur. A legal post stands four feet above ground, and is flat on both sides for at least one foot from the top. You see, these posts are perfectly legal."

"Can't we pull 'em up?" asked the factor, and when the inspector had replied in the negative, he objected:

"They ain't legal miners."

"Can you give me proof that the men do not hold free miners' certificates?" said Hanafin sharply. "This claim cannot be touched unless the miner who has staked assigns, or allows his ownership to lapse."

"And by all the gold of Jerusalem, here he comes!" shouted MacCaskill.

Down the hillside Olaffson proceeded uncon-

cernedly, making a straight line for us, and presently we could hear him whistling.

"Mornin'!" he called insolently, when half-a-dozen yards away.

"Well?" said Hanafin, fixing him with his keen glance. "What's your business?"

"With you, mister. You're mining recorder of the district, I guess?"

"Yes; until the Department makes an appointment."

"I want to take out a miner's certificate, an' I want to record a claim."

"You do, eh?" called MacCaskill, moving out menacingly. "And what you'll get is an everlastin' poundin' with a spruce stick—"

"If there's anything personal between you and this man, wait till I have done with him," interrupted Hanafin curtly.

The factor turned to me, growling and fuming, and I was hot enough to say:

"We've got a lot against him. He burnt my house at Yellow Sands. He tried to settle me at Gull—"

"I've not fallen in love with the man," interposed Hanafin. "Anyhow, the charges you bring are rather outside my jurisdiction. This man is merely an agent. He is repeating the lessons his principal has taught him. Did Redpath ask you to take out a certificate for him as well?" he asked ironically.

The stunted figure held its ground.

"Redpath's gone."

"Who's been working this claim with you?"

"An old Indian."

"Lift up your foot," ordered Hanafin.

The Icelander looked startled, but thought it best to obey.

Hanafin called Akshelah.

"Look at that boot. Now will you find me one of his partner's tracks?"

Akshelah found it immediately upon the hard sand. Hanafin knelt by the impression, took a little tape-measure from his pocket, and measured it every way. When he had finished, he consulted his pocket-book. Then he smiled.

"When Redpath escaped me that night he shot the trooper, I took the precaution of measuring a footprint he left in the mud before mounting. Now I am able to prove that this man is a liar!"

MacCaskill chuckled. The scoundrels had met more than their match.

"You may carry a message from me to your master," went on Hanafin, and he scribbled upon a leaf of the ever-present pocket-book, and gave the note into the Icelander's short hand. Then he said: "Give me ten dollars."

"Yes, mister," said Olaffson, and his face became almost cheerful as he handed over the money, which he had ready in bills crushed up in his hand. Hanafin began to write again, and he spoke each word aloud as he set it down:

"Dominion of Canada Free miner's certificate. Non-transferable. Date. Number One. Valid for one year only This is to certify that— What's your first name?"

"Don't know."

"Olaffson," wrote down the inspector. "Where do you come from?"

"Anywhere."

"Of Hannan City," wrote the owner of the name, a smile about his mouth, "has paid me this day the sum of ten dollars, and is entitled to all the rights and privileges of a free miner for one year from the date of this certificate." He wrote his signature, tore out the leaf, and gave it to the applicant. "Come to my office after noon to-morrow to record your claim. A grant for placer-mining is too lengthy to make out here. The fee will be fifteen dollars."

"Here it is, mister!" exclaimed the Icelander, holding out his other hand.

"You have learnt your lesson well. I cannot take the money now. Bring it to-morrow to my office in Front Street. And remember," he added curtly, "this is your claim, and any other man who works upon it without your consent renders himself liable to be arrested."

As we turned away, MacCaskill began to complain.

"Why did you want to use him so good?" he demanded.

Hanafin answered contentedly: "I think I have

checkmated Redpath. Wait until you see how Olaffson's noble character develops under what I have said to him." His manner changed, and he went on briskly: "Let's prospect. If there is gold in the creek, we shall find surface indications beneath yonder rocks. I'll wash out the first pan for luck."

He stopped just under the bank, where the creek bent obliquely, and taking MacCaskill's shovel, rapidly cleared away the surface accumulations, and turned up the coarse gravel and stones, throwing this waste aside with quick, easy motions.

"Now for pay-dirt!"

He lifted a little of the finer gravel into the pan, which MacCaskill held out with nervous hands.

"First we strike our bar," said Hanafin, as we went down to where the water ran to the river, "then wash out a few panfuls of the gravel or sand, and watch for the colours. By the number we find it becomes easy after a little experience to calculate how much in cold cash the bar will yield daily."

"This dirt's awful rich!" gasped MacCaskill, shifting the pan from side to side. "Look at the specks a-glitterin'!"

"Wait until the water goes in. Give me the pan."

Hanafin took the shallow steel dish, and inserted it into the water with a deft side motion, bringing it out again with the same movement.

A cry of admiration broke from the mercurial

factor when a host of sparklets sprang towards the surface of the pan, and settled down slowly through the water, turning over and over.

"Look at that, Rupe!" he shouted, hitting me with his elbow.

"No good," said Hanafin grimly; and MacCaskill's joy departed from him.

"What! Ain't that gold?" he asked angrily.

"Flake gold. There's less than one cent's worth there. Those specks are flatter than gold-leaf. If there is pay-dirt, it will be among the black sand at the bottom."

The inspector continued to whirl the pan, and then he inclined it, still shaking, with a more gentle and rotary movement, and we saw the gravel washed out into the water of the creek, until nothing was left except a deposit of black sand, which we learnt was pulverised magnetic iron ore.

"Fine or coarse, or none at all?" the inspector muttered, bending low.

"I suppose fine dirt ain't no pay?" suggested MacCaskill morosely.

"Yes, but it involves slow and laborious methods," replied the man who shook the pan. "We should have to introduce a little mercury to form an amalgam with the gold. This amalgam we should then heat on a shovel, until the mercury had been given off in vapour, and the gold would remain in a lump. Look there!"

He had washed away nearly all the black sand,

and now pointed to some tiny specks nestling by themselves in a corner of the pan.

"Coarse—ten cents at the least."

"Golden gates!" exclaimed MacCaskill. "You call this gold-minin'! I wouldn't a-troubled to have picked out that little bit of stuff."

"Ten cents to one pan is excellent pay. Far less than that gives a grub stake," said Hanafin. Then he looked up at MacCaskill's dissatisfied countenance. "Nobody who has not been a miner understands anything about this business. Whenever the discovery cry gets heard, thousands come racing out of the world full of the idea that they are just going to stake, record, dig and pick out lumps of solid gold, which they will exchange for cash, and return to the world with a fortune. This is the reality. This is a rich country, boys, which is going to make millionaires. Now I'll show you where to stake."

We followed Hanafin to where the creeks joined, and below this junction, going in the direction of the running water, between Olaffson's claim and the river, he stopped.

"The gold from both creeks should be held here. Number One claim may be the richest, as Redpath guessed. Cut your stakes, and I'll measure out."

When we had staked out Number Three, which was the factor's, I went back to my own. On the flatted side of the post I saw that Hanafin had fastened a piece of paper, and I found to my

great delight that I was able to read what he had written. The paper bore the name of my claim, "Number Two MacCaskill," its length, the date, and my name in full.

But "Number Four MacCaskill" was being staked, and Hanafin smiled mysteriously as he affixed its description on the flat side of the near post.

"Mr. John Smith!" exclaimed MacCaskill, after reading. "Who in Jerusalem's he?"

Hanafin's mysterious smile continued.

"He's something by necessity out of red-tape," he said. "It's not for me to break the letter of the law, but a man must help himself when he has nothing beyond his pay. I know, anyhow, that you won't give 'Mr. Smith' away."

"Good luck to ye!" exclaimed the factor heartily, and I endorsed his cry.

We ferried back across the Akshelah, climbed up the channel, and so back towards Mosquito Hole.

MacCaskill had one question to ask:

"What might that message have been you sent to Redpath?"

Hanafin replied:

"The man has gone too far. I am after him for the shooting of one of my own boys, and he stakes out a claim under my nose, and sends his partner to me to record for him. The message I sent was that I had given instructions for him to be shot on sight."

And MacCaskill chuckled delightedly.

We reached the brow, where we could take our last look over Bonanza, and here Akshelah called out. Two pigmy figures were to be seen toiling and sweating upon "Number One MacCaskill."

Hanafin broke the silence.

"One can't help admiring sheer perseverance. We will leave him to his treasure-hunting now, but to-morrow we shall all be down there, and then—exit Redpath."

We descended the canyon, but by the time we regained the defile, old friends were awaiting us—Lennie, Pete, Dave, and company, all with great packs containing supplies they had taken from the *Carillon*. They greeted us loudly, and not without a certain amount of chaff.

"So you have got here, you crowd!" said MacCaskill, very morosely.

"And we ain't here for our health either," piped Lennie joyously. "The ole boat can lie on the mud while I stake out me claim. I ain't cheatin' anyone. See? She belongs to rich companies, an' ye can't cheat companies."

"Say! ain't you ben hustlin'?" exclaimed Pete admiringly. "Run a big buildin' up in jest no time, ye have!"

The soldiers had done their work quickly, and the log-house looked well upon the long green slope.

Suddenly Hanafin stepped out of the aperture left for the door, and fastened a notice outside.

We all gathered round to read:—

"Temporary Barracks and City Hall, Hanafin City.

Inspector, HENRY P. HANAFIN,
(North-West Mounted Police),
Temporary Acting Gold Commissioner
and Mining Recorder."

The men took off their hats and gave three wild cheers for Hanafin City.

We had guarded our secret well, MacCaskill and I; and yet, despite our care, the population on the day of our arrival had numbered ten. Already it was eighteen.

DISQUALIFIED

It was noon, and there was not a sound in the city. Front Street consisted as yet of the log-built town hall, our own unfinished residence, and a tent brought from the mud-held ship. The population had gone through the tunnel into Bonanza, with the exception of Hanafin, Akshelah, and myself. MacCaskill had gone early to his claim, having the night before improvised, with Norman's aid, a marvellous rocker. Even the uncouth Morrison had gone after the dirt. He had passed me earlier, and I had asked him whether he felt lonely now that justice had overtaken his late associate, only to receive the reply, which I might have looked for:

"Sure! Ye see, he owed me fourteen dollars."

I had arranged with my partner to stay and complete our shanty, so that we might have shelter in case of bad weather. I had worked all morning, and had finished everything, except the thatching, when Hanafin came up and handed me the first official documents I had ever received, one being my free miner's certificate, the other a grant for placer-mining over "Number Two MacCaskill."

"How old is mademoiselle?" asked the hand-

some soldier, turning to the girl with a smile, which, from some cause known only to herself, did not appear to fascinate her.

I happened to know, and replied for her that she would be eighteen at the beginning of winter.

"Ah, that's a pity!" said Hanafin sincerely. "Eighteen is the age-limit. Had you been a few months older I could have given you a certificate also."

"I do not want the yellow dirt," said Akshelah, quite angrily.

The inspector laughed, and muttering "Happy girl!" walked back to what he called his office.

"Tell me what is written there," said Akshelah, eyeing the sheet suspiciously.

I was not sure whether I could read it, but I tried, and made a wonderful success. Slowly, and with not a little blundering over the harder words, I made out the following:—

"No. 2. Department of the Interior.

"Agency, Hanafin City, North-west Athabasca (?), July, 1895.

"In consideration of the payment of the prescribed fee by Rupert Petrie, of Yellow Sands, the Minister of the Interior hereby grants to the said Rupert Petrie, for the term of one year from the date hereof, the exclusive right of entry upon the claim registered as Number Two, MacCaskill Gulch, Akshelah River district, in the country called Bonanza, for the miner-like working thereof, and the construction of a

residence thereon; and the exclusive right to all the proceeds realised therefrom, upon which, however, the royalty prescribed by the regulations (to be approved of by Order in Council) shall be paid.

"The said Rupert Petrie shall be entitled to the use of so much of the water naturally flowing through or past his claim, and not already lawfully appropriated, as shall be necessary for the due working thereof, and to drain his claim free of charge.

"This grant does not convey to the said Rupert Petrie any right of ownership in the soil covered by the said claim; and the said grant shall lapse and be forfeited unless the claim is continuously, and in good faith, worked by the said Rupert Petrie or his associates.

"HENRY P. HANAFIN,
"(Acting) Mining Recorder."

Akshelah sighed.

"And you are going to look for the yellow dirt, too?" she said lingeringly.

"That's what I came away for," I answered her lightly.

"He made you come." She meant MacCaskill. "You did not want to come away. You were happy beside the bright waters, and I was very happy. We caught the fish, and we hunted." Her eyes were full of tears. "You have forgotten all that, and you never laugh with me now."

She was partly right. I was growing worldly-wise, but I did not forget. I could not forget the walks with Akshelah over the rolling grass-hills,

among the tall sulphur-lilies, and those idle paddles on my own little laughing water. I did not forget the hunting expeditions, and those songs and stories we had sung and told to each other, and those foolish kisses under the sunshine, and sometimes under the moon. How could I forget those happiest days? All had been so peaceful in that life which seemed so far away, until Redpath, the destroyer of trust, had come to link my quiet world with his, and all since then had been fighting and deceit. Had not this place and its gold ruined my father?

The voice of Akshelah was in my ears.

"We shall stay here, and Pepooa will creep up around us, and Mispoor will fall and hold us. The long night will come, and the ghost-lights will whisper always in the sky." She shuddered. "And there will be beast-men! I see them coming, the men who will drink hot waters, and fight one another through the long night, and they will take me away from you, and I shall die—far from my own people and my own land. And you will learn the ways of that world; you—you will drink hot waters, and fight too."

Had my poor maid gone on in that strain, I think she would have prevailed upon me to have taken her home; but the figure of Hanafin stood out, and I heard his voice shouting to me.

"Be brave, little squirrel," I said, taking her two small hands. Then I hurriedly kissed her wet eyes, and obeyed the inspector's call.

Olaffson was inside the office, sitting upon a log, his white face malevolent and hungry-looking.

Hanafin turned to me, and spoke at once.

"You told me, Petrie, that the late Leblanc upon a certain occasion accused this man of being the murderer of old Fagge. I want this matter cleared up finally, both for your sake and for the sake of the old man's connections south. I understand you have accused the late Mr. Petrie of being the murderer," he went on, addressing the Icelander, who broke in at once:

"That was Redpath. He thought Petrie done it, I guess. I know now Petrie didn't, but I never thought 'twas Leblanc till t'other night. He 'cused me, 'cause he hated me bad. I took a knife to him one time, but he druve me to it." He paused, and wiped his mouth. "Now, Jim Morrison mighter told ye quite a bit. They was pards, an' Gedeon was man to ole Fagge for quite a while. The ole chap was moony." The Icelander's voice grew louder with confidence. "Ole man struck a wonderful rich find right here. Right here! A reg'lar hole of dirt, coarse dirt, an' nothing but dirt."

Perspiration started out upon his slimy forehead, and he paused for breath, blinking at us.

"Get along," said Hanafin quietly.

"Leblanc knew of it, an' no one 'cept him an' ole man did know of it. So Leblanc got to work, an' fixed ole man late one night when he was asleep, an' when Petrie was asleep. Ye see, he reckoned to

come back one time, an' open up that hole. P'r'aps he never split to Jim. P'r'aps he was hidin' it from Jim."

"Stay a bit," said Hanafin. "How did you find out this?"

The Icelander grinned.

"The night he an' Jim got here, I come around to try an' level up things wi' Leblanc. Jim had lef' him, an' gone to Mister Petrie's camp. Gedeon was a-sittin' by a rock, sorter stupid wi' hunger, an' a-talkin' to hisself, so pleased to have got here. I set beside that rock, an' listened to his talk. That's how I found out. I might a-been his priest, an' him a-confessin'."

"You tried to kill him," I interjected.

"He shifted hisself by accident, an' I scarce touched him. He was a dirty murderer, anyhow," said the little wretch, unabashed.

"You told this to Redpath?" questioned Hanafin.

"Had to," admitted Olaffson, though he had only yesterday sworn that Redpath was not in the district. "Ye see, Gedeon never let out jest where the place was, an' I don't know the first thing 'bout prospectin'. It was somewhere near where them two creeks jined, an' I told Redpath, an' he staked out that claim at the forks." He spat a chew upon the ground, and got up, smacking his two stunted hands together. "An' now I've beat him. Gol' darn it, but I've beat him every way!"

"Now we understand why Redpath stops here," said Hanafin to me. "Now we understand the reason for that haste of his." He added still more slowly: "Now you understand how I have checkmated Redpath."

"How?" I exclaimed.

"Listen," said Hanafin.

The Icelander was raving in his triumph.

"What's his price, inspector? What's the Government figure for Redpath? I've got him for sale. Ye shall have him. I've got no more use for him. I'll sell him, body an' blood an' bones."

The little miscreant shivered with his excitement.

"How about the claim?" suggested Hanafin.

"It's mine," slobbered the Icelander. "Redpath paid the ten dollars for the certificate an' the fifteen for the grant. Redpath found the claim, an' measured it, an' staked it out, an' showed me what to do. But I'm certified owner, an' he ain't allowed on that claim. The claim is registered to me; Redpath can't come upon it. He don't dare look upon it. He don't dare come outer his dug-out, 'cause he'll be shot on sight, 'cause he's wanted for murder. You're right, mister; you're right all the way. You've beat him; an' the claim's mine, an' all the gold in it's mine, an' I'm a-goin' to dig for it right now. Jest gimme me claim, mister; jest gimme the grant what you promised me. Number One MacCaskill. That's the hole. Here's the fifteen dollars—Redpath's fifteen—mister inspector.

You've beat Redpath, an' I'll give him away to ye, 'cause he's no more bit of use. I'll sell him to ye cheap, body an' clothes an' big talk."

Breathless and panting, he pushed the money out towards the inspector, but Hanafin did not take it.

Hanafin had beaten Redpath. That was true; but was it true that Olaffson had beaten the inspector? Was the Icelander even then playing his part, and speaking the words taught him by Redpath? My eyes were upon Hanafin, and it appeared to me that a sense of failure was set upon his face. Presently he stirred.

"Carey!" he called.

After a pause of intense silence, broken by Olaffson's excited breathing, he called again:

"Carey!"

"Here, sir!"

The soldier-policeman appeared at the door, struggling into his tight jacket.

"This man, Carey, this Icelander—his name is Olaffson—has, I find, an exceedingly bad record, and I have just discovered that he is guilty, upon his own confession, of attempting murder within the city limits. Take him a mile along the defile, set him south, and instruct him to continue in that direction. If you find him about the city or Bonanza after to-day, arrest him at once, and bring him before me. If he should, on any such occasion, attempt to escape, you may shoot."

"Yes, sir."

The next minute Hanafin was speaking to me in his usual pleasant manner.

"You must abandon your present claim, Petrie, and take Number One MacCaskill, which is at present vacant. I will alter the description in your grant, if you will give it me. No! It is not allowed to argue with a superior officer. There's a miner's motto, which you will do well to remember, and it is this, 'Never be satisfied with a grub stake.'"

THAT PRIEST AGAIN!

ON a certain evening, about eleven o'clock, when the sun was setting reluctantly over the western end of the defile, a lone stranger came into the line of vision of MacCaskill and myself, an elderly man, thin and grizzled, sweating under the weight of a heavy pack. Once he stopped to shade his eyes and peer about, then, having probably caught sight of the log buildings, he tramped on and approached us as we sat outside our shanty. MacCaskill had been grumbling, because he had not yet grown accustomed to ten-cent pans.

"I want to pick it up in lumps," he growled, pinching his little buckskin bag, which was rapidly becoming fat. Then he, too, caught sight of the stranger, who came up to us, as though to greet old friends. "See there!" exclaimed the factor hoarsely, "here comes another! Another damned sooner!"

The elderly man let down his pack, and nodded very gravely.

"How are ye?" he said, in a high nasal voice, proceeding to mop his face with a dirty shirt-sleeve. "How do I come, eh? One of the first, I guess. No big crowd ben before me, eh?" he

said, mouthing each word slowly. "What's yer population, pard?"

MacCaskill enlightened him. The grizzled man appeared to be incapable of smiling, but he gave me the impression of being satisfied.

"Well," he said, "I'm always right on time. That's me, pards! If I don't come in wi' the first, I don't come in at all. I'm Moccasin Bill, pards. That's me. What are ye callin' the place?"

"Hanafin City," I replied, as MacCaskill was relighting his stone pipe.

"Well, an' a vurry nice city," said Moccasin Bill, allowing his eye to roam along the defile, where the shadows were beginning to gather. "Pards, I'll jest set right down, an' get some supper acrost me. Ain't got a saloon here yet?"

"We're only startin'," admitted MacCaskill.

The old man opened his pack, and produced some fat bacon and a fry-pan.

"Tell ye," he said profoundly, "the hull world 'll be on a buzz be now, I guess. The Noo York papers, an' the London papers, an' the whole durned rest uv 'em will be jest runnin' over 'bout this place."

MacCaskill growled out his anger.

"How the Jerusalem have they come to know?"

Grizzled Bill's bacon began to hiss in the pan. He turned his solemn face towards us.

"Ye ain't reg'lars. No offence, pards. Can see ye ain't. What's the use o' tryin' to explain things what can't be explained?"

"If it hadn't been for me, this place wouldn't ever a-been discovered," boasted MacCaskill falsely.

The new-comer was as cool as ice.

"Listen-a-here." He turned his bacon, and sniffed hungrily at the greasy steam. "I ben in South Africa a-minin', an' I ben in West Australy a-minin', and I ben in Californy a-minin'." He paused, then added: "Now I come here a-minin'. I'm a lone hand. I allus have been a lone hand."

"Ain't ye got any relations?" asked MacCaskill, when the miner stopped.

"The world's a-crawlin' wi' 'em. I was a-goin' to say this, pard, jest this: I've packed along one time wi' me ole ox, or me ole hoss, an' maybe I'd see a pesky vulture a-comin' away off, just like a bug en the sky, an' then another, an' then another, an' lots uv 'em, all like bits o' bugs. They'd be coming my way, see, an' I'd say to meself, 'There's a funeral.' Me ole ox, or me ole hoss, would pack along right as right, good an' strong; but the bugs would get bigger, an' turn inter big bugs, and the big bugs would get bigger yet, and black, an' they'd come around, a-flappin', an' a-callin', an' a-rubber-neckin' wi' their ugly bare necks. Then down would go me ole ox or me ole hoss, wi' staggers, or fly, or pissen-grass, an' then the vultures would sorter chuckle, jest like, 'Told ye there was a blow-out a-comin' to us.' An' down they'd come, an' I'd know that the ole pack-ox or the ole pack-hoss would have to go. I can't tell ye how them vultures knew, 'cause I

wouldn't know meself, that the ole beast was a-goin' to break. But I says this to ye, that if a pesky bird can do that, a worldful o' pesky men oughter be able to do as good.

"If a man gets to find gold, he ain't a-goin' to keep it to hisself. No, sir! 'Tain't in nature. Other men are a-comin' up to have their bite. They smells it en the air. They feels it en their innards. The wind whistles uv it, an' off they start, a-sniffin' to find the place, like half a million dogs. They'll be comin' in be scores every day. I passed quite a few on me way. They're comin' in be boat mostly, an' I come in be land. Me ole pack-hoss played out yesterday, an' I come on wi' me own trotters. Moccasin Bill ain't never a-goin' to get left. Not him!"

The professional miner spoke deliberately, pausing often to find the word he wanted. When he had done this lengthy speech he started upon his supper. After the arrival of Moccasin Bill an endless stream of miners, and those who live upon them, came in; one week of such an inrush caused the very characteristics of the place to change. Log buildings sprang up with inconceivable rapidity along both sides of the defile, making Hanafin City a fact as well as a name. A large store became under course of erection, and across its unfinished front suspended a huge canvas, bearing the inscription, "The Bonanza Trading and Supply Association." Bales and boxes of such supplies were packed by oxen over the Bad

Lands from Lake Peace. The men of the Association drew the *Carillon* off the mud-flats, patched her up, and steamed her away south, to report how they had discovered her, wrecked and deserted. Lennie and his men kept their own counsel. Two saloons were erected. One roulette table had already arrived, and was working day and night. A branch of one of the leading banks had been established. A detachment of police arrived, and a Government representative to assume the functions of Gold Commissioner.

The Government were hard at work defining that portion of the north-west territory which we had named Bonanza, and great power was given to Inspector Hanafin to adjust the mining law, and to administer the same. He was instructed to meet any difficulties that might occur by the exercise of his own judgment, without waiting for authority. He assumed the local rank of Commissioner, and later a post from Ottawa awarded this rank to him absolutely. A mail service into the interior was inaugurated, police stations were established, and patrols traversed the country. Quite at the end of August the flag of the Hudson Bay Company went up, and Fort Hanafin became marked upon the m. ». By that date a theatre had been built upon Front Street, and performances, known as variety shows, were given nightly. After supper the city was alive with lights and singing, with drunkenness and gambling, and there were women in the place.

Mosquito Pass had been blown up, and a great rent appeared in the cliffs where the miners passed to and from Bonanza. The spruce bluff had vanished, the trees having been cut down for use, and the graves of Joe Fagge and Leblanc, his murderer, had been trampled out. The opening of the cliffs made the canyon far less of a blow-pipe, and I missed the wild music, which only became sonorous in times of storm. Along both sides of the Akshelah numbers of tents showed, with heaps of dump, scores of rockers and sluice boxes, shining picks and spades, and clumsy barrows, and all around figures of men, running, stooping, shovelling, washing out, apparently never at rest. "MacCaskill" and "Petrie" creeks were staked out for miles back. River claims and hill claims were also staked out, every alternate ten claims being reserved for the Government. A royalty of ten per cent. was levied by the Gold Commissioner, and collected, in spite of loud grumblings from the miners, on the gross output of every claim.

Number One MacCaskill was my claim; Number Two was occupied by the "Athabasca Mining Syndicate, Limited"; Number Three was leased to MacCaskill; Numbers Four to Eight to Lennie and Company; Number Nine to Moccasin Bill; Number Ten to one Jake Peterssen; while Numbers Eleven to Twenty, both inclusive, belonged to the Dominion Government.

It will be remembered that Hanafin had staked

out a claim under the style of Mr. John Smith, because, owing to something he called "red-tape," his position debarred him from working as a miner, or holding a claim. When he had made me shift my stakes, after the ejection of Olaffson, he had himself come into Number Two, and had recorded this claim to the Athabasca Mining Syndicate, which was himself. He hired two Swedes, who had come in, like so many, without supplies, to work the claim for him as agent of the company, at a remuneration of five dollars and food per day. When these assistants had made sufficient money they started mining on their own account, and then Hanafin simply hired two more improvident hands, and thus the work of the Company proceeded.

Claim Number Ten was worked by my former opponent, Jake Peterssen. The tidings of Bonanza had quickly reached Gull in that inexplicable manner which Hanafin named "wireless telegraphy," and many of the men threw up their work upon the lumber and "came in," Peterssen among them. He told me that I had spoilt his right arm, and that he was no good for lumbering; but when he gripped my hand in greeting, I felt glad that I should never be called upon to stand up to him again.

By the end of August all these things had come to pass, and still people were flocking in every day, despite the fact that the night began to threaten, and that winter was near. To show how the camp

was governed by Hanafin, I narrate the following incident :—

A gang of bullies arrived, with no intention of mining or doing honest trade, but simply bent upon ruling the place by fear, and living by means of terrorism. These foul-mouthed beast-men, as Akshelah rightly named them, spent most of the day in the principal saloon, drinking at the expense of others, and when satisfied for the time, came out upon Front Street, and, having captured a certain honest little character, Jimmy Carruthers by name, proceeded to haze him in front of the saloon. The little man, who had come into town to purchase supplies, took the treatment good-naturedly at first, but presently one of the bullies ordered him to dance for their edification. When he did not come up to expectation, the brute poked at his ribs with a pointed stake, thereby reaching the limits of Jim's endurance. He refused to gratify his tormentors further, thereupon the chief bully pulled out a revolver, and shouted :

"Dance, ye little cuss, or I'll make a hole through ye!"

Hanafin proceeded up the street with Norman at his side, but the disturbers of the city's peace did not see them. I noticed that the Commissioner quickened his walk. Jimmy Carruthers was blenching from the revolver, because it was obvious that the half-drunken bully was no respecter of life, and was calling out for mercy, when Hanafin pushed him aside.

"Norman!" exclaimed the Commissioner, "arrest that man."

The bully went dark with anger.

"Arrest me, ye skunk! Arrest me—"

There he stopped, threw up his arms, coughed once, choked, and fell forward. An angry little curl of smoke floated away down Front Street, to the accompaniment of a few sharp echoes among the cliffs. The bully had drawn upon Norman, and the Commissioner shot him dead at once.

Then he rounded upon the others, who snarled menacingly, and advanced in a half-circle, brave because of their numbers. The Commissioner whipped out his long sword, and the bullies stopped, more, I fancy, because of the cold light in Hanafin's eyes than for fear of the cold steel.

"Put up your hands," said the Commissioner quietly, "else I'll have the crowd of you hanged before supper. This mining camp is in British territory, I'll make you remember, and I am the representative of the Queen."

He removed his little forage cap, and Norman followed the example of his chief. The bullies weakened, and obeyed with surly oaths. Norman was ordered to search each one, and the majority were found to be carrying secret weapons. These were marched off to the barracks, and sentenced to one month's imprisonment. That same evening a proclamation was issued and posted about the city.

After the date of that proclamation, any man found carrying hidden weapons, either in the town or about Bonanza, would be fined one hundred and fifty dollars for a first offence. For a second, he would be deprived of all miner's privileges, and be dismissed from the district. The miners read, and realised what sort of a representative they had over them.

Hanafin City became the capital of the most law-abiding mining country that the world has ever seen; so said the old miners. Yet when I went to visit the man who had done this, I found him soaking his hands in hot water, to prevent his fingers from losing their delicate shape and whiteness. I am never likely to know whether Hanafin, who was a combination of cleverness, coolness, courage, and conceit, was a typical Englishman, but I like to think he was. I would have done anything for that man.

"Commissioner," I said, on the night following the affair with the bullies, but he interrupted me—"My name is Hanafin." This was merely one out of many instances in which he tried to set me at my ease.

"You called yourself to-day the representative of the Queen," I went on. "An old man, who found me when Redpath put me away to starve off the coast of Gull, sang 'God save the Queen.' Who is this Queen?"

I thought Hanafin was about to laugh, then he went grave.

"Is it possible?" I heard him murmur, before he said profoundly, "Boy! you have been buried!"

"I have lived at Yellow Sands since my babyhood," I said.

"Of course," said he, "you could not know. But you are an Englishman, and that makes your question sound more than ever strange to my English ears. Well, listen! I'll tell you something about our Empress and her Empire."

He proceeded to give me a startling description of the world, of its rulers, its politics, and its universal unrest—a description which caused my mind to expand, if not to respond, and my brain whirled when I walked home.

MacCaskill I mention to say that we were partners only in name—that is to say, we still lived together, Akshelah cooking for us and minding us; but that was all. We were separated in work and in recreation. It was my pleasure to watch the life and activity of the ever-growing population of the city, but always at a distance. MacCaskill loved life, too, but he liked to be a part of it, and it was the life of the saloon and the gambling-den that he loved. The factor ran against congenial spirits, who had knocked about the world; they suited him better than the ignorant youth who, though born inside the world, had been bred and brought up upon the outside.

We came to the beginning of September, when the population of Hanafin City, the wind-crossed defile of the former month, was over five thousand souls. One night I was teaching Akshelah to read, and proud indeed to find myself in the position of schoolmaster, when a message summoned me to the chief.

Hanafin was pushing himself to and fro in a rocking-chair beside his table—luxuries which had just reached the city—and Carey stood beside him. I imagined that something must have gone wrong, for the Commissioner's face was angry.

"Petrie," he said at once, "have you heard anything of Redpath?"

When I had replied in the negative Hanafin mused for a few moments, watching me, then said:

"Father Lacombe has arrived in the city."

I gave a great start, and Hanafin went on:

"Father Lacombe is a noted missionary. He could hardly find the leisure to come here, and if he had been thinking of doing so I should have heard. It certainly is possible for him to have come from Three Points by river and portage, then by lake, and so over the flats; but in that case the patrol would have seen him and reported. Repeat your statement, Carey."

"It is said that the priest was paddled along the shore by Indians, who also packed his things on from the beach. No one saw him on the route. He arrived yesterday, and has a tent in West Hanafin;

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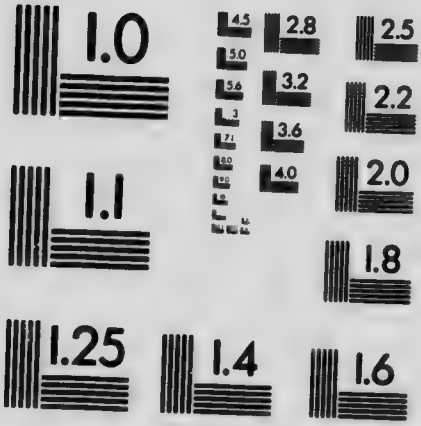

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but he has not been seen to-day. I am told he is unwell after his journey. The Indians declare he is Father Lacombe, of Three Points—"

"Their word goes for nothing. Because I have not succeeded in finding Redpath's hiding-place, he has come out into the open again, and defies me. I'll teach him his last lesson to-night."

Hanafin pulled his fur-lined cloak about him with angry movements, and we three left headquarters, and made towards the western annex.

"Redpath would never have taken that name," I began, when Hanafin, who was decidedly out of temper, took me up sharply.

"If it had been Father Jones, or Father Anybody, I might have suspected nothing. The blind is obvious. Redpath knows he has me to deal with. He thinks he will be safe under the name which I must regard as the most unlikely for him to select."

We came up and saw the solitary tent, glowing with a light inside. Outside an Indian was chopping wood. We were quite away from the noise and rush of Front Street. A big shadow was moving inside the tent. It stopped, and suddenly settled down to half its former height. The Commissioner went to the Indian, and summarily dismissed him on some mission. Then he and I approached the tent-flap, and Carey followed. I whispered:

"Shall we cut the ropes?"

"I mark my game before I shoot," said Hanafin, and he put out his hand to the tent-flap.

Then I noticed that this was one of the tents made with a window—that is, a detachable piece of canvas about five feet above ground, which could be lowered to enable the occupant to see out; the hole was covered with a piece of fine gauze to keep out the mosquitos. I drew my companion's attention to this, and we went up silently, and together looked into the tent.

The priest was upon his knees, his face buried in his hands.

Hanafin's face seemed to tighten, and his lips twitched.

A lamp hung from the tent-pole. The priest knelt before a box, upon which were arranged a few books, and in the centre a curious device of wood and ivory.

"What is that?" I whispered.

"They call it a crucifix," came the answer, which told me nothing.

We expected to see the face of a villain, the loose face and flabby skin, the cold eyes and the smooth smile of Redpath. It was a firm face that we saw when the head came up and the hands lowered and clasped each other, a kind, even a noble face; and the eyes, when they opened, were deep and grey. It was a face that I could have gazed at for a long time, because I had seen nothing like it before, but Hanafin was pulling my arm.

"Come away," he whispered hoarsely.

I watched lingeringly, and the priest, raising his

right hand, touched his wide forehead, and then traced his long fingers down and across his chest. My untaught mind awoke and responded to the act, and began to seek in its ignorance for more knowledge.

The strong-minded Commissioner was positively trembling.

"Heaven be thanked that I did not cut those ropes! My reputation would have gone for ever."

"Who is he?" I said, the glamour of the scene impressed upon my struggling mind.

"He is the Reverend Gabriel Lacombe, who, I believe, could be a cardinal if he chose, but who prefers to serve in the solitude reclaiming Indians. The great Lacombe, who has refused an archbishopric! And I was going to jump upon him for a murderer! Carey, not a word, if you desire mentioning!"

VI

THE NIGHT

CAN A LEOPARD CHANGE HIS SPOTS?

UPON the 19th of September, Akshelah came in from her own little hut behind my shanty. Her cheeks were a wonderful ripe colour. She looked at me with large, sad eyes, and softly announced:

"She has come!"

I had already felt the exhilaration of the atmosphere, and I had been conscious of the raw, strong light, though I could not see outside, so I knew that the change had come. I did not put any question to Akshelah, but I must have looked it with my eyes.

She replied simply, "Mispoor," and I went out.

Mispoor, the lovely cold goddess, had indeed come to us in the night, and all the country glared and shivered. The mountain ranges looked to have moved and come closer. Hanafin City was shrouded, and all things had increased in size. The water along the defile was the colour of indigo. The smoke hung in the stagnant air like thick lumps of wool. Here was Pepooa, and the night was upon us.

"We cannot go away now," said a plaintive voice behind.

Akshelah was right. We could not go away while the night lasted. The prison bars were closing round us; the light went out fast; we were two occupants of the gilded prison called Bonanza, and we could not escape until the time of May, when the Spirit of the Green Mantles should tear open the waterways, and melt apart the bars of ice.

I went inside my shanty, and desolation and loneliness fell and settled over me. In all that busy cosmopolitan mining town I was alone. I was friendless and forsaken.

MacCaskill had left me. We had drifted apart gradually, because I would not join him in the saloon or at the faro table; he had bought a tent, and pitched it in Bonanza upon his claim, and there made merry with his new friends. Wealth had poured in upon him like the riches of an old tale. His claim had turned out to be the Eldorado hole of old Fagge. Hanafin and Redpath had each made the pardonable mistake of thinking that the treasure would be found immediately below the forks. Probably Leblanc had known that it was five hundred feet lower down, but Justice had overtaken him before he could make use of his ill-bought knowledge. MacCaskill was the lucky man, the drawer of the highest prize in this gigantic lottery. He had achieved the height of his ambition; he had found the gold which should satisfy all the cravings of avarice. Apart from his finds of the stone, he would frequently wash out over one

hundred and fifty dollars in dirt alone per day.

At one time I thought that he must be gathering in his fortune fast—that fortune with which he hoped to retire to luxury in New York City, but I found myself in error. How did he spend his wealth? The city prices were not exorbitant. Flour cost nine dollars, fat bacon twenty-five, sugar seventeen for fifty pounds, beans ten dollars per bushel, and a pound of tea could be bought for two dollars.

But on a certain night MacCaskill made me enter the largest of the saloons upon Front Street. One half of the place was devoted to drinking, the other half to gambling.

My companion soon left me to join a gang, and I grew tired of waiting for him and came away.

Later I met Lennie, who was slipping downwards fast.

"Say!" he exclaimed, with unwonted eagerness but customary insobriety, "your ole pard Mac's ben havin' q[illegible] d streak. Heard of it?"

When I ha[illegible], Lennie proceeded:

"He starte[illegible] to run the faro bank dry, did Mac, an' he's ben cleared out of fourteen thousand dollars. Come and liquor."

I refused, and walked away, Lennie jeering after me taunts of pride, because it was a bad breach of etiquette to refuse to drink. I was making myself unpopular that way, but I simply could not swallow the smoky, scorching spirit. Only a few minutes

later I met MacCaskill, surrounded by a gang of half-drunken miners; he was himself half drunk, more with the madness of gambling than with liquor, and was swearing furiously that he had not finished with that faro bank.

"Wait till I lift a few more thousands outer my hole. I'll bust it!" he shouted.

The gang passed on, MacCaskill not more than a yard from me; but already a great gulf spread between us. He had been changed by coming into Bonanza; I had remained the same.

Father Lacombe had gone. He had only spent a fortnight in Hanafin City. I was presented to him, and proclaimed my utter ignorance at once, because, not knowing how to address him, I asked the natural question whether he had come to mine.

"Yes," he replied, his grey eyes lighting. "It is my idea to stake out and record the entire district."

He asked me into his tent, and both then and on several subsequent occasions, because he was a man who never seemed to want sleep, unfolded to me another world, even more mysterious than the inside and outside worlds I already had knowledge of. When he had gone, another blank was made; but he sent a priest to form a mission, and this Father Casey came for me, and continued my education where his superior had left off. He was planning to erect a church in Hanafin City, and I had promised him five thousand dollars from my own rich finds.

Hanafin had gone. That was the saddest loss of

all. He had been recalled by Government to make his report upon the new district, and on the 10th of September I had wrung his hand and said good-bye, and then turned away from the handsome aristocratic Englishman, who had deigned to be my friend, weary at heart, because I knew that I should never see him again. He would go home and marry his beautiful English sweetheart, and find the place that had been appointed for him. The Athabasca Mining Syndicate, Limited, paid good dividends, he had assured me, and later on I heard that he had made an assignment of the claim for a high figure. He had done very well, and I feel sure he deserved all his success. So on that morning when the snow came, which would not begin to melt until the following late April, I broke down under the realisation of my loneliness. Two men had declared themselves my partner—one an unprincipled rascal, who had always held a complete influence over me; the other as true as steel, and as weak as sand; both had deceived and forsaken me. I was alone, and yet—

An arm went round my neck, and a flushed face looked down on mine.

"You have lost your friends," said a sad little voice. "But all the time I have had only you."

And had it not been for her, should I have ever seen Bonanza?

I took Akshelah's hand, and she sat beside me, and there we remained in silence, with the snow around us, and the ice coming up.

"I should not have come away, but he persuaded me. My father advised me to stay—with you. But I wanted to see what life was."

"Ah, and you have seen it," said Akshelah. Then, after a pause: "Do you like it?"

"I hate it."

"And the women of the world—do you like them?"

I have referred to the women who had entered Hanafin City. Their numbers had grown of late; women wonderfully dressed in bright colours, with faces of careless strength and boldness, with cold eyes and mechanically laughing mouths. "Fine women," MacCaskill had dubbed them. I thought of them when Akshelah spoke, and I looked at her large bright eyes, her delicate colouring, her soft fawn skin, her wealth of rich black hair. I mentally compared this maid of the outside with the women of the inside. So, I thought, would the great City of London, my birthplace inside the world, compare with my little home outside.

"Do you like the women?" Akshelah was asking again, and I answered her truly, and she was satisfied.

The day soon darkened, and the pale snow became ghastly when the arch of the aurora lit, and the livid spears lengthened and shortened across a clear black sky. The atmosphere lowered and tightened its hold upon us, as the grim frost began to assert its long rule, and the thermometer went down, far below zero, and still down. The close season had come.

I had five thousand dollars for Father Casey in

the currency of the country, having made the exchange at the bank that morning. The money was fastened up into a little bundle, which I had left lying ready to hand, because there was little fear of anything being stolen in this mining town. Akshelah had gone out, and I was sitting alone in the lantern light, beside my cook-stove, when the fall of footsteps crunched the snow; a hand felt across the piece of canvas which did duty for a door; there was the sound of quick breathing; the flap gave way, and a well-known voice spoke familiarly:

"Good evening, Petrie!"

A terrible apparition introduced itself into my shanty. A tall figure, abnormally thin, with unspeakable rags clinging about it; an emaciated face, where two great cheek-bones protruded as though they must burst the skin; two pouches of bloodless flesh represented cheeks; two cold, deeply-sunken eyes; two large loose ears; a little grey hair, and a neck that had dwindled down to the dimensions of a stove-pipe. This was the Redpath who advanced to bend greedily over my glowing stove.

"An inclement night, my dear fellow. Really miserably cold and cheerless. Well, and how are you? Of course, I ought to have visited you long ago; but you know, perhaps, how peculiarly I have been situated. An incident of a painful nature has compelled me to retire into temporary seclusion. Even now I have to exercise supreme caution. Ah,

excuse my clothes, Petrie. Anything goes in a mining camp, you know."

The same as yesterday!

The living skeleton reached out a hand which made me shiver, and closed it upon my pipe. He looked round.

"I don't see your tobacco. Ah, thanks." He began to fill my pipe, but I noticed that it was only with the utmost difficulty he could maintain an upright position. "Well, and how are things? Going smoothly, eh? Confounded nuisance my being knocked out of it for the time. Excuse plain speaking, Petrie, but I really think you might have done a little more for me. I know it's *sauve qui peut* in gold-mining, as in most other things, and shove the hindmost to the devil. You needn't remind me. Ah, well, bygones must be bygones. I thought I'd just trot round, look you up, and have a bit of supper with you, old man, to show there's no ill-feeling on my part; but I daresay, with my usual inaccuracy, I've dropped in at the wrong time, and you've done your bite."

He could talk in that strain though he was fainting, and absolutely starved. He began to sway to and fro, and sometimes groped blindly. I could not bear to look at him.

"I never expected to see you again," I said.

"You thought Hanafin had driven me away?" Redpath spoke with the greatest difficulty, and the bony hand that clutched my still unlighted pipe

shook in a horrid fashion. "I have been in hiding a few miles from Bonanza, awaiting my opportunity. It has been decidedly lonesome and, of course, annoying, because I have been compelled to furnish myself with supplies. I think you said that you have had your supper? Hanafin has gone, I hear. He could not find me, after all. He was wasted here . . . admirable tactician . . . clever in finesse . . . sees the board with his mind . . . always sure of his next move, anticipates yours. . . . You move one way —check . . . you move another way—check . . . then checkmate; down comes your number, and the lights go out. Ah, God! What an earthquake!"

The unhappy wretch reeled about in an agony, stumbled against the stove, and cried like an animal when he felt his leg scorched. It was horrible to watch him being tortured, but with all his pride striving to conceal it.

I pushed him down upon a log of wood, and as quickly as I could put some food before his half-blind eyes, and gave him some hot whisky in a tin mug. It was marvellous how rapidly the food and drink acted. In a very short time Redpath was his cynical self again, and I noticed that he had the sense and the self-restraint to eat sparingly.

"I most sincerely beg your pardon," he said with dignity. "It is altogether inexcusable to enter a man's house and straightway make a scene before him. It is most unpardonable and ridiculous. The fact is, I breakfasted very early, found myself too

busy to take luncheon, and this keen winter's air acts suddenly upon an empty stomach and such a weak constitution as mine. You see, Petrie, we sometimes over-estimate our strength. We forget we are getting on in years."

Then he again took up my pipe, lighted it, and smoked heartily. What was I to do with this man, who appeared to think that I had wronged him?

"It is not safe for you to be here," I said. "Why don't you go away?"

"That is impossible now that the winter has come," said Redpath, as though pitying my ignorance. "Besides, this place has attractions for me. It has been the object of my life to attain. I have played my hand very badly, and must now suffer the consequences. I shall not go. Indeed, my finances happen to be too shaky to permit me to travel. There is plenty to be picked up about here."

"Honestly?" I inquired.

His eyebrows went up.

"Spare me bathos," he said entreatingly.

"Where is Olaffson?"

The expression on the human skeleton's face altered.

"Ah, you may congratulate me there! He has gone, and, I trust, for ever. I can feel myself a free man now. Olaffson has really gone, and my malediction goes with him and after him."

"Hadn't you better go?" I suggested, following the train of thought. "If you are found in my shanty—"

"Ah, yes, I understand! Your skill in touching

upon these delicate matters is very remarkable, Petrie. Why mince the matter? Let us say boldly that the law, as administered here so admirably, would exact a penalty from you were I to be discovered under your hospitable roof." He poured himself out some more whisky. "Here is your very excellent health. All that you can possibly wish me do I wish you."

He drank slowly, his eyes half shut.

"Good-night!" I said coldly.

"You good fellow!" said Redpath warmly, clasping my hand in his cold, bony grip. With his spare hand, I noticed, he was gathering up the scraps of food he had left, and stuffing the same somewhere among his rags. "With your never-failing good heart, you speed your parting guest. Good-night, dear old boy! I'm coming round again very shortly, as I have a suggestion to lay before you. Make both our fortunes in a very little time. Good-night, Don't come with me. I must slip along the back of the street, and 'ware soldiers."

He went, my pipe in his mouth, and my plug of tobacco in his hand. Devoutly I hoped that I had seen the last of him.

I had promised to visit Father Casey that same night, to leave with him my little donation. I put on my hat, coat, and overshoes, and looked for my tiny bundle of money—that five thousand dollars.

Will it be believed that I looked in vain?

THE HUNTERS AND THE HUNTED

THERE were no October leaves to fall upon Hanafin City; the ragged spruce held its dark greenery, which looked black under the snow and glaze of ice, but all else was dead; not a bird flew, not an insect trumpeted, nothing marked the carpet of the covered cliffs. Where had the countless millions of mosquitos gone? Where the sable ravens, and the loons and divers? Nothing would be alive again until April. It was the time of the great silence.

Beginning at an hour before noon, and continuing until three, a glimmering of raw light visited us, a pale unhealthy ghost-light, without sun, and all the rest was night. Not darkness, because the aurora rose and set, and sometimes the uneven arch was white and brilliant; but generally it was smoky, and sometimes pale-blue and livid, and sometimes it was red and terrible. There it hung, swaying over us mysteriously, loaded with electricity, shivering, darting, whispering, and influencing our lives and movements by its moods. Everything was frozen. The temperature of eighty or ninety degrees of cold kept us working for warmth, and to rid ourselves of the superfluous electricity which that magnetic land poured into our bodies.

It was the close season for placer-mining, and

there was only one thing we could do, namely, to drift out our pay streaks by burning. All the miners of Bonanza were thawing the frozen ground with fire, and they told me that this method of winter-mining had never been attempted before. First we cut away the moss and surface accumulations until solid ground was reached. In the hole thus made we would build a fire, and when this had died down we would throw out the ashes, and as much of the ground as had been thawed out, make another fire, and repeat the process, until we had burnt our way down to bed rock. We would then build our fires against the bank of the hole, and drift sideways, moving perhaps one foot of pay dirt each day. The dirt thus brought out we would dump in piles, to be left until spring, when water could be obtained to wash out the pay. I mention this to show how we passed the winter in Bonanza. Everywhere these fires were burning, and all day the smoke hung or drifted very slowly, in thick sheets like vast overhanging masses of wool.

My claim had not proved so rich as the one I had vacated, and yet it was impressed upon me that I had done very well. I had taken out altogether some eight thousand dollars, the bulk of which had been stolen by Redpath, and the greater part of what remained would be swallowed up in buying supplies during the winter. None of the men from the *Carillon* had done any good, and Jim Morrison was a loafer about the city. Jake Peterssen, with many another, made a very substantial grub stake.

MacCaskill was the one lucky man, who had struck a "world-beater," but his wealth benefited only the saloon proprietors upon Front Street.

It was a day in November, when, after buying some tea and sugar at the store of the Bonanza Trading and Supply Association, during the short period of the glimmer, I became attracted by a notice suspended over the big stove. A knot of men were discussing the same loudly and angrily. I could read anything by that time, so I went up; and this is what I read:—

"The Citizens of Hanafin City are warned that there is a bad gang of sneak thieves around the place. Quite a few things, such as grub and tools, have been missed around Bonanza. Old Man Septimus M'Quatrain had a fur cap and coat lifted out of his tent right on his claim, Number Twenty-three Petrie Gulch. Bill Petro had a bag of dirt and twenty pounds of bacon cycloned away from his dug-out. These are just examples of what has been going on. The Citizens are requested to keep their eyes skinned; and if any of them think they are upon a good track, they will be doing the right thing to themselves and this City if they communicate right off with the undersigned, or any of the City councillors.

"ALEC. MACINNES,
"Mayor of Hanafin City.

"P.S.—Mind that bundle of money lifted off Rupe Petrie."

The days crept on to the end of the month, and the thefts went on, too, while the public anger became hotter, and excitement fired the entire

city. There are crimes worse than murder in the eyes of miners: such crimes as tampering with another man's claim in the close season, taking a neighbour's lawful water; but above all, opening and rifling an associate's cache, the special act of guilt for which pardon can never be given. When any man is sentenced of robbing a cache, let that man be condemned!

One miner assured me that in the course of a long life spent about the gold-mines of the world, only two cases of this extreme guilt had ever come within his knowledge. The miner trusts his associates implicitly. Before going away, he will store his supplies, his tools, and his tent inside a cave, or in some hole, set his name upon the outside and his mind at rest, because he knows that no miner will touch his cache or its contents, however hard put to it he may be for supplies. The rascal who would rob a church will not touch a cache.

There were three quaint old men of Hanafin City, all as like each other as it was posssible for men to be, named respectively Rod, Abe, and Pal, close friends, but not related. These men had come in during the beginning of August with a quantity of supplies, and had gone out about the middle of September, before the coming of the ice, after they had stored their possessions in a cache upon the partnership claim, which was 1,000 feet in length, and rectangular in form, going up the hill from the Akshelah. They were fine old gentlemen, very

popular, true miners, who understood the science of their profession thoroughly. They went out to escape the night, with the idea of returning to work their claim in the spring.

Upon the 27th of November, at twenty minutes past six by the clock in the Record Office, a patrol rode into Hanafin, horse and rider white with frost, and a few minutes later a report passed feverishly about the city that the cache of the three old men had been tampered with. The deep-toned threatenings of the infuriated citizens had hardly broken out when Moccasin Bill appeared upon Front Street, his grizzled beard heavy with ice, and his preternaturally grave face sterner even than usual. He stood upon the street, in front of the principal drinking and gambling saloon, and called in his high nasal tones:

"Boys all! I've jest come right from old men's cache. I've ben burnin' on me new claim alongside."

The miners came about him in the weird night under the aurora. The snow wore a greenish hue, and the frost crystals danced in the firelike atmosphere as so many electric sparks. I could see the lumps of ice upon Bill's beard knocking together when his head moved. A shout went up from the saloon, and the men came forth like hornets out of their nest, smoking, swearing, shouting, among them MacCaskill, his big face scarlet, his tongue noisy, his hands full of money, because the interruption had drawn him from the furious

excitement of the faro table. The crowd surged up and around Moccasin Bill.

"Boys all! old men's cache has ben pulled inter pieces. Everything's ben took. This city uv our Queen has ben disgraced—"

I could see his lips still moving, but what more he said was lost in the mad shoutings of all Hanafin. These men were terrible. Their faces were like those one half sees passing in a bad dream. Their cigars had dropped, and I could see the red points blinking upon the green snow. The electric light of the sky flashed and hissed over their heads and all their insanity. At last Moccasin Bill was heard again.

"I've ben around. Them things were took to-day. There's tracks en the snow—"

There he was stopped. A yelling went up on every side, and the men ran together, apparently in confusion, but all with an object—to prepare themselves for a journey. A thousand men made for the silent canyon, a thousand men poured through what once had been Mosquito Hole, and that thousand men swept over the snow and the hidden treasures of Bonanza. So the hunt began. The pursuers were men, and their quarry men. They were more terrible than dogs, these hunters, because men can call off the dogs of chase. But who can call off men?

"Say!" A hand pulled my arm, and a frightened voice exclaimed: "The Commissioner's away!"

It was Dave, late of the *Carillon*.

"Don't ye see?" he went on fearfully. "The boys are so mad there 'll be no holdin' of 'em. The Commissioner's gone around the country, an' won't be back before the week end. The boys 'll jest take the law i· ·er their own hands."

"What will they do if they catch the thieves?" I could hardly speak with fear, because I was sure I could name one of the marauders.

"They'll flog 'em sure. They'll hang 'em. They're so ter'ble mad, p'r'aps they'll put 'em on the wood-pile."

I shuddered dreadfully. The frost choked my breath when I tried to protest against the horror of burning fellow-men.

"The police will stop it," I managed to say.

"The police 'll make the boys give 'em over to the law, if so be they're strong enough. But there's only fifty of 'em in Hanafin, now the Commissioner's gone wi' his crowd."

A quiet settled over the city, perhaps because it felt a tragedy impending, perhaps because the noisiest fifth part of its inhabitants were hunting in the night over Bonanza. I did not sleep during the hours which are considered night in the other worl· Sometimes I looked out fearfully along sil· Front Street, which spread away under the pale green glow, the ·· ·ts from the saloons flashing on the near side, an· upon the far side, from the Variety Theatre, came fitfully a burst of harsh music

or a yell of drunken applause. One or two huge huskies moved slowly about the snow like hungry bears.

The hours of business returned, but the hunters were not among us. The glimmer of hopeless daylight reached us, and the miners went out into Bonanza to watch and wait for the hound' but there was no burning done. There were no signs of the thousand who had gone forth to hunt, beyond their innumerable tracks in the snow.

"They'll be ter'ble cold an' hungry," said some.

Then an old man, who knew all the moods of the arctic winter, put up his hand at noon, and pointed north.

"There's wind a-comin' there," he said. "If they ain't back afore night, we won't see half of 'em no more."

I saw the scar of misty cloud he indicated rising out of the northern snows, a long thin patch, the colour of indigo, and as it ascended all our dim, sad light went out.

Only a few citizens knew that a posse of police had set forth during the night, so soon as the hunters had gone out, and no one could know which direction they had taken, because it is the habit of these men to ride back upon their tracks, and jump their horses to some patch of ground which the wind has swept clean of snow, and so ride away and baffle pursuit. The few who knew guessed that they had gone to bring the Commissioner. They would have to ride against time, and the act of God.

The *Hanafin Herald*, our daily paper, did not appear, not for the lack of news that day, but because the men who prepared it were out upon the chase.

By two o'clock daylight was done; at three, no news; about four, the aurora came up like dark blue smoke, and the atmosphere was entirely without motion; five, the silence was still unbroken, the air so still that it would never have supported a feather; at ten minutes past, the snow-dust along Front Street began to whirl in small eddies. It was a fantastic sight, and the man who was weather-wise chewed his cigar-end fiercely.

"It's a-goin' to be an old-time night," he said simply.

Six o'clock, and the murmur of many voices filled the city. The hunters were returning from Bonanza. The atmosphere was filled with a stream of liquid ice, and the noise of feet tramping upon snow. The dark blue aurora was growing purple, and a dreadful darkness settled down, like something tangible and creeping.

Out of the closeness of that gloom the procession entered Hanafin City. First came a sweeping van of misty ghosts, whirling along side by side, formed by columns of ice-cold snow-dust, whipped up into the atmosphere by some northern current sent as a forerunner of the great wind; then those who had gone forth to watch and wait; after these, the hunters and the hunted.

WHEN SENTENCE IS GIVEN, LET HIM BE CONDEMNED

SOME of the hunters carried packs, silent witnesses brought to appear against the hunted; and at the end of the procession eight men staggered, four of them leaning to one side, and four to the other. Before these had advanced into the open, a cyclonic spout of wind swept over the northern cliffs, rushed down, and broke upon us. The torrent swept and roared through Hanafin, so that none of us could determine the nature of the burden that the eight men carried.

Then the night became terrible. One man might stand holding another, yet neither would be able to see the other; the snow-dust choked the wind and lashed upon our faces with cold ice-pricks; above us, around, and below the grey sea of wind and snow roared, and rushed, and smote.

A great crowd had massed in Front Street, surging to and fro, jostling and pushing, but each separate individual in that crowd could feel himself alone in that arctic tempest. The voices were heard no longer, because in her insanity Nature can roar louder than a million madmen. Now and again

a light goggled out of the grey whirl, to disappear in an instant.

That crowd drifted towards the doors of the big saloon, and I was carried with them, my face smarting under the lash of ice. Already the great hall appeared choked, and yet I believe hundreds were packed in after I tumbled inside. The space used for dancing was a sea of humanity, and, like the sea, it roared and heaved; the gambling-tables had been folded up and set aside; the bar was thronged. Still the men came, with here and there a woman who had long ago abandoned self-respect, and the passion of the assembly became greater. Everyone was wildly shouting, and I could gather nothing from the tumult.

A great voice sounded over us, and this voice rolled from end to end in the order, "Quit yer noise!"

A silence fell into the crowd, but outside the arctic storm went yelling on its way.

A chair had been placed upon the bar counter, and on this chair Moccasin Bill seated his spare figure. To his right stood MacInnes, the mayor; to his left the man who had become a stranger to me, my former partner MacCaskill. These three looked down upon us.

"Shet the doors," commanded Moccasin Bill, "an' keep 'em shet. The rest uv the citizens must get away home, 'cause there ain't room for 'em en here. Make a space right there."

He pointed down, and the sea of men heaved back, until I found it hard to draw breath.

Grizzled Bill rose solemnly.

"Citizens," he proclaimed, pulling off his fur cap and holding it out, "ye know as well as me that we're on British territory, where the law ain't jest what it is en minin' towns over the line. Ther' the miners make their own law, an' pays out their own justice. Right here the law is the law uv the country, an tis administered by the judge uv the Court. I a n't for sayin' anything 'gainst that. We ain't all British be any manner uv means, but while we're en Hanafin City we're subjects o' Queen Victoria. Citizens, I say this is a case where we're entitled to take the law inter our own hands."

The voices answered him with a great shout of approval.

"I've ben appointed judge," went on the old man solemnly. "An' me bowers are the mayor uv this city an' Factor MacCaskill, the first miner inter Bonanza. I've ben judge afore this, boys, an' I've jedged fair, I've ben told, and, 'fore God, I'll judge fair again."

The old man bent forward, and peered over the upturned faces rising and falling beneath.

"Bring up that prisoner!" he called, and the crowd swayed to and fro, and my heart began to thud.

I heard the voice of the judge asking, "Where's the other pris'ner?"

Every word of the answer reached my ears.

"Out in the snow, judge. He'll thaw inside."

"What's that?" I asked the man who was jammed upon me.

"Guess t'other pris'ner's ben froze," he gasped back.

"Burn him! Burn him!" was the cry going up around the building. If the man had been frost-bitten, let him be thawed with fire. "Burn him!"

"Order!" shouted the mayor.

The prisoner stood before his judge. I craned my neck, but I could not see. I was fastened into the crowd like a cork in a bottle.

"Who is he?" I called, because Redpath was tall, and this man surely was short, or I should have seen him.

"'Tis a little man," spoke a very tall miner generally, "wi' a face like lumps o' wet dough."

Olaffson, the Icelander, for the last time.

"He's sweatin' an' skulkin' something horrid," said the tall miner.

"Pris'ner!" spoke the grizzled judge, and the entire assembly tried to push forward. "Ther' has ben a lot uv sneak-thievin' about this city an' around Bonanza. You was took right among a lot uv stolen property. There's jest one case we want to try special, an' that's the robbin' uv the cache what belongs to ole men, Rod, Abe, an' Pal, who've gone out for the winter. We didn't

find none o' that stuff in your dug-out, nor yet in yer pard's. We surmise you've hid it away some place. If you speak up, an' show grit, we'll take that into consideration when we come to pass sentence. Are ye guilty, or are ye not guilty?"

The pause which followed was not silence, because the wind screamed and the snow hissed where it struck. Surely the prisoner upon the other side of the door would be frozen to death, and his guards with him.

A voice proclaimed, "Says he's not guilty."

The crowd broke into furious shouts, "Flog him! Flog him!"

"Quit yer noise!" the judge ordered angrily. "This is a court uv justice."

He spoke to MacInnes, and the latter held up a big coon coat.

"'Twas found in the pris'ner's dug-out," explained the mayor. "Does any citizen claim it?"

"That's mine," shouted the coarse voice of old miner Septimus M'Quatrain. "The durned thief! Likewise an otter cap."

"Here 'tis," said MacInnes. He then put up twenty pounds of very fat bacon.

Bill Petro shouted:

"Lemme smell a hunk, an' I'll tell. I spilt me c'l-can over me bacon."

The mayor sniffed gravely.

"Ay, it smells of coal oil all right, Bill," he said.

Not a laugh went up from the crowd. Only the same angry mutterings and the deep growls, "Flog him!"

"You've pleaded not guilty, pris'ner," said the judge. "Them things were found en yer dug-out. What have ye got to say en yer defence?"

The men near the inaudible wretch repeated his frightened answer, and it was passed on through the crowd.

"Says he never took 'em. Says he knows who did. Says his pard done it all."

"Pris'ner," exclaimed the judge with sudden heat, "ye are the meanest skunk what ever trod!"

The citizens broke loose again.

"Wood-pile, jedge! Say wood-pile!" [illegible] under it all the monotonous antiphon, "Flog him!"

Above the tumult of those demands, and the insanity of the elements, a bull-like bellow roared, and an arm, like a black tree, shot up—the black arm which I had once broken at Gull.

"Jake Peterssen for the floggin'!" yelled the half-mad crowd, and refused to be quieted.

The judge was talking with MacCaskill, and so soon as he could make his voice heard, called to know if I were present. Directly I had answered, the negro shouted:

"He's a better man than me, jedge. He beat me. He's the boy ye want. Rupe Petrie fo' the floggin'!"

The miners took up the cry and yelled it, until I

could already hear Olaffson's vile screams for mercy, and the horrid shock of a heavy whip. When he was allowed to speak, the judge recounted the charges brought by the factor against the prisoner—the burning of my home, the treachery at Gull upon the lake, and at Hanafin; and I had to answer that the story was all true.

"Bring in his pard," the voices were demanding.

The judge spoke grimly to the Icelander.

"Ye are a mean, skulkin' louse, pris'ner, an' we don't have to show ye no pity, though I allow we ain't got nothing 'cept what they call circumstantial e'idence 'gainst ye. Jest ye tell me if ther' is any sort uv reason why we should show mercy to ye."

"He's sweatin' awful," said the tall miner.

Olaffson had only his former story. His partner had been the thief.

The voices went up strongly:

"Fetch in his pard."

Moccasin Bill almost smiled.

"Fetch in his pard," he repeated terribly.

The doors were open, and in fought the rush of snow and wind, and the lamp flames leapt wildly. There was a sound of struggling, of lifting, and of carrying. The doors were shut again, and I knew that Redpath was amongst us, the cynical, opinionative English gentleman, the man who had made such a miserable failure of that space between coming and going called life. Redpath for the last time.

He had come to my home at Yellow Sands, like a thief in the night; he had come to mock at my misery in the old stone ruin of the bush, where he hoped to steal away my life; he had come half a skeleton to be fed, and, after taking my hospitality, had robbed me and gone. As he entered then, what was the influence of that superior smile, what the use of that gentlemanly manner, and what the power of that contemptuous glance?

He had always been fond of 'ife.

Four men carried a long shape, swathed in a snow-covered blanket. They proceeded to unwrap this shape. It was like unrolling a sheet of lead, because the cruel frost had made the thick duffle rigid and unyielding. The blanket came away gradually, and revealed the man, frozen body and blood and bones. The flesh frozen into ridges, was as solid to the touch as stone, and colder far. They had brought me forward to identify the frozen man.

"His name was Redpath," I said. "He was my father's enemy, and I know he was a thief."

"The corpse is guilty," said the judge, and a whisper of assent hurried round the building.

I could still find that old superior smile upon Redpath's face. It could not disappear, because it was frozen there, and it seemed to me to be intended for myself, and for those around, the men who had hunted him down who now judged and had found him guilty, but who could not condemn. Through his half-open lips I saw his white even teeth. They

were the only pleasant feature he possessed, and they were false.

The blanket frozen round the frozen man was claimed by one miner; the clothes he had been frozen in by another; my bundle of money was discovered in one of the pockets, and returned to me; everything upon him, from the clothes to a lump of tobacco, had been stolen. The only thing he had failed to steal was a longer span of the life he loved.

I stood between Olaffson and the dead; the one silent for ever, the other wringing and cringing in an agony. Still I felt that inexplicable pity for the Englishman. He had once been friendly with my father; he had taken the hand of my mother, whom I had never seen; he had held me as a baby upon his knee. A revulsion of feeling crossed me when I looked upon Olaffson, and for him I had no pity at all. I heard the vengeful voices demanding, "Sentence the pris'ner, jedge." Once MacCaskill's glance met mine, and he turned aside with an awkward movement. Moccasin Bill stood up.

"Ye are guilty, pris'ner," he said slowly. "I've ben around the world en me time, an' followed the yeller every place, an' I've seen crooks an' blacklegs shot an' hung—ay, an' burned—an' I've stood by an' said as how they deserved it. But I've never known a worse case than this." The assenting voices shouted again. "No, boys," he said, appealing to his audience, "I've never known a worse case than

this. Ye have ben tried fair, pris'ner. We're on Canadian soil, an' a Canuk has tried ye. For I'm Canadian, boys; I'm Canadian to the cuticle. Ye are guilty of sneak-thievin', pris'ner. Ye are jest a louse what wants poundin', an' we're a-goin' to pound ye. The boys want to have ye flogged."

The voice of the grizzled judge became drowned, and above all the yells sounded the mighty bull bellow of Jake Peterssen, calling my name, and invoking my right arm for the punishment of the thief.

"I sentence ye to be flogged," said the judge. "Fifty lashes—"

Then it seemed to me as though the wind had swept into the building, and had caught up the assembly, and brought them down upon me like an overwhelming wave. I heard the screams of Olaffson. They had seized him, and were dragging him this way and that. My name was upon everyone's lips. "Rupe Petrie!" The place howled with it. The wind caught it up, and whirled it away over all Bonanza. And still the men were shouting, "Rupe Petrie!"

I understood at length that a tribute had been paid to my strength, that, partly because the condemned had wronged me, I had been appointed by the judge public executioner to the city.

I could not—I shouted that I could not—do what was required of me, but I might as successfully have appealed to the wild wind outside as to the wilder

men about me. The whip was being made; Olaffson, beside himself with terror, was being stripped; and the scene made me sick when the entire meaning of my hideous duty confronted me. And all the time the men shouted with mad tongues, and around were all the demon faces and the demon eyes. Jake Peterssen snatched my weak hand and wrung it in congratulation, confident that he had shown himself my friend.

Another shout went up. The doors were being bombarded with fists and kicks.

"The boys are spoilin' to get inside."

"Open up!" called some of the men.

"There's no room for 'em!" shouted Moccasin Bill.

The arctic temperature streamed inside; the tempest paused in its yelling, to draw its icy breath for a fresh outburst. A strong voice, muffled and angry, demanded admission in the name of the Queen-Empress.

"Open," said the judge.

Again the stream of wind and ice, and the delirious leaping of the lights. Figures like white bears pushed inward, their moustaches frozen up in fine snow, a snow-covered figure at their head, grasping a sword covered with crystals in his fur mitt—the Commissioner himself; and behind him his police.

"Draw on them!" the representative shouted, and the white company brought up their revolvers and

covered every part of the building. Two men at least felt the joy of reprieve—the executioner and the condemned.

"Hand over that man!" called the Commissioner.

The crowd growled like lions disappointed of their prey. This Commissioner was a different man from Hanafin. He was bold and hard, but had no tact, and when he gave an order he would have it instantly obeyed, though he might accompany it with a curse or an insult.

"Hand him over, or I'll cancel the certificates of the lot of you."

"We tried him fair, Commissioner," entreated Moccasin Bill. "He ain't done so much agin her gracious Majesty as agin us boys. He an' his pard, who's froze solid ther', have ben bad sneak-thieves, an' we've ben an' took this case right inter our own hands for this once. You'd only put him inter prison, but we're a-goin' to hang him."

The City of Hanafin endorsed every word spoken by their own appointed judge.

The Commissioner simply gave the word of command to his men. Four tall figures shoved forward, the fine snow falling off their furs.

"Shoot anyone who interferes!" shouted the angry Commissioner.

MacInnes, the mayor, spoke aside to Moccasin Bill.

"Boys!" called the latter, "the law has got to be obeyed. Let the police have the pris'ner."

The miners could scarcely obey the order of their

own judge, but the police made the arrest of Olaffson, and marched him out. The Commissioner wheeled round sharply, with a satisfied smile, and followed. But while the clouds of snow hissed inwards, the mayor, standing stiff upon the bar counter, yelled with all his might:

"Boys! To hell with the sneak-thief!"

The men went mad again. Taking up the cry, they rushed into the whirling night, into the freezing, tearing wind and the grey torrent of snow, and flung themselves upon the police. Revolvers flashed uselessly, and swords darted aimlessly, stabbing merely the great grey shapes that fled down the wind ghost-like. The miners of Hanafin were drunk with fury, and they were in thousands against a handful. Soldier after soldier was seized and dragged to the light of the saloon, that each might be identified. The time came when they found the one shrieking wretch they wanted. . . .

I fled, battling against the stream of ice, away from the life I had come from home to see.

Standing beside the stove in my shanty I found poor Akshelah, shivering with terror. The relief of finding myself alone with her, the delight of being able to console and assure her! She had told me that I was all she had. What had I upon earth beside her?

"We have no enemies to follow us now, little squirrel," I said, stroking her thick warm hair. "Redpath is frozen into stone, and Olaffson,"

I shivered, because the shrieks of the wind were pitilessly human.

"The white face!" she said fearfully, coming up to me.

"They are killing him now."

She shivered, and clung to me more closely. She spoke presently.

"I told you the factor loved the yellow stones." She was playing nervously with my cold fingers. "He has left you, and—you have no one now."

I lifted her face and kissed her soft mouth with a new feeling which made me forget everything save the present.

"I have all that I want. And when the storm has done, we will go together to Father Casey, and tell him"—the wind became terrible, and I had to wait for it to pass—"that we want to be together all our lives."

VII

BONANZA

WHERE THE SUN SHINES UPON THE SAND

It was the beginning of June, and my wife and I had travelled since the end of April, when the break-up had visited the land somewhat earlier than usual. It was the season of sound after the silence of winter, the season which we call Sekwun, or the Spring. The streams were running among the hills, the wavies were calling overhead, the snow buntings were whirling past in clouds, and the crocus made the slopes purple; and we were happy—we were coming home. The long night was done, the aurora had gone out, and the sun turned everything into gold.

The five awful months filling the interval are black to look upon now. I had nothing to bind me to the false Bonanza. I had parted with my claim, not unselfishly, but because I needed it no more.

I had found an old gentleman, another Englishman, and a very frail old man, who had been ruined by his only son, and who had come into the new land to try and find a little gold, not so much for the

comforting of his old age as to enable him to pay the profligate's debts, and so to clear an honourable name. He had often come to my shanty during the eternal night, and he was never so happy as when talking about his unnatural son.

Once, in conversation, he began to narrate how he had followed the young man after nightfall along the London way which he called Piccadilly, being anxious to learn in what company the scapegrace spent his time; but the latter discovered the nearness of his father, and escaped.

"He eluded me beside the Park," said the old man, "but I could not be sure which way he went. However, later that night—"

I interrupted his recollections.

"Is there not an archway of white stone," I said suddenly, "opening into a big space where there are trees and walks? Perhaps your son went under that arch."

The old gentleman started and stared at me.

"You told me you had passed all your life out here!" he exclaimed.

"My father brought me out from London as a baby," I said, wondering at my own late words.

After an interval of silence, the old gentleman spoke, and explained for me.

"Your nurse would have taken you through the Park every day, I daresay, and often out at Hyde Park Corner. That is the archway which you remember. You must have seen it with your

baby eyes, and your brain still retains the impression."

Another night I ventured to ask him how his claim had worked before the coming of the close season, and the question made him sad.

"No good," he said, in his quiet voice. "It is a hill claim, and such are hard to work. I have found next to nothing."

Before leaving Hanafin City, I went to the Record Office, paid the fee of two dollars, and registered an assignment of my grant permitting me to mine upon Number One MacCaskill. The following day I paid the required fee of fifteen dollars, and took out a new grant made in favour of Alexander Pearson, the good old English gentleman, whose only fault was his too great affection for a worthless son. I sent this little present by Akshelah, who gave it into his hands, and then came away, as I had [illegible]d her, and we left Hanafin City at once. I believe there was a good deal of coarse gold left in that claim. I hope there was.

On that last night I went to bid farewell to MacCaskill, with whom I had not spoken since Christmas. He had come out with me as my partner, and I could not go away without bidding him good-bye. It was not difficult to find him, but when I came out of the drinking saloon into the gambling division, and discovered him, I did not carry out my intention. He was drunk, not

with liquor, but with the fever and passion of gambling, and he was watching the faro cards with the wild stare of a hungry beast. I did speak to him once, but he took no heed; I ventured to touch his arm, but he only looked ahead, and howled "Lost again!" and pulled out more gold. He had not noticed me, and I went sadly away, to see him no more. I left MacCaskill, the lucky owner of old Fagge's gold-hole, to realise his dreams.

"See!" exclaimed happy Akshelah, as our canoe, which I had bought at Waterhen from one of the Swampy Tribes, brushed lightly along the smiling shore of our own Lake Whispering.

I looked, and saw upon the slopes that tiny rare red flower which blooms on a level with the ground, and which refuses to live within the influence of human passions. It is even true that this flower will alter its colour, and become blue, if men settle near the spot where it grows; and if many people collect, and a town or village springs up, the little plant dies altogether, because it is too ethereal to live where men breathe, and move, and defile the atmosphere.

I sprang ashore and picked some of the plant, but directly I touched the bloom it withered in my hands, and Akshelah tried with a like result. Had we been going out I might have been depressed, but we were home again, so we laughed and sang aloud with the excellent happiness that comes so seldom. We paddled on towards the bend in the

brimming lake, because the sun was falling low behind.

Now I was coming to the land of treasure. I had left Yellow Sands to look for it, and all the time I had it, and by coming away left it behind. Happy for me that no one had discovered it in my absence! For the true Bonanza is home, wherever it may be. Some may have that dear home in the city or country inside, and some in the world outside; but wherever it is, there the heart turns, like the robin, who leaves us for the long winter, but flies back in the spring. The canoe swept round the bend, where the fine shingle murmured with the play of the emerald water. Before us we saw the sun shining upon the golden sands.

My home had been rebuilt, and I was expected. Antoine was planting potatoes that evening, and pointed with a grunt to a fresh piece of garden land, which he had reclaimed from the willows and wood-ants. Everything was scented and delicious in the magnificent spring. And below, my own little Yellow Sands ran with its sparkling music.

Such is my dream of the false Bonanza. I am awake again now—awake, with the old remembered song of the waters beneath, and my bright-eyed wife at my side. I am satisfied, because I have proved the two worlds, and tried the men who live in each. I am happy, because I have escaped

from the world which I could never love, because I am surrounded by the wonderful Nature which is all I ask for.

So I shall never leave my northern home again.

THE END

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